

THE WIRE
ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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Rewind 2000

Charting the year's best
music

Mark E Smith's

Remembered

Amiri Baraka

David Grubbs

Smiling faces sometimes

hide a wicked and vicious bite

John Wobble's Euphany

Barbara Morgenstern

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editor's idea

I 2000 wasn't a relatively total blur, after a couple of days editing our Review retrospective this month, I'm left with this page to find out quite knowing what was this year, what was the previous year, or the sounds I heard sticking my head in the washing machine aged Three Most of the year's highlights came in a rush at the very end, namely a deeply moving, human tribute to William Blake, in song and story, by Pat Smith at St James's Church in Central London, and the all too brief glimpse of Iceland's new musical horizons outlined on page 26 (special thanks to composer Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson for his sage and imaginative guidance).

2000 was a particularly strong year for underground Hip-Hop — rediscovering the power of the Word, the likes of Anti-Pop Consortium, Sonic Sum and Mike Ladd made for some astonishingly wended out and singular poetry. Writing on Hip-Hop was where critical language found itself stretching furthest to accommodate the music's supersonic developments.

As ever, it was a constant source of regret to watch scores of amazing looking records fly out of the office on their way to our freelance reviewers, without always having the chance to listen to them myself. Nevertheless, some of the great pleasures I did manage to catch came from outlying territories in the music industry's eyes, at least: Fussible, Bostich and Panoptica — floor-milling Techno-notefo from Tijuana, Capetown — Brazilian electronica unreality-bathing with Argentinian duo Reynolds (more Ethnopaques) (Buda Musique) and Hugh Tracey recordings out of Africa, Scandinavian stuff — Rime Grammaton, Kjetil Bransdal, Åke-Helge Krimmo Polytönen, Sigur Rós, Kitchen Motors, Apparat Organ Quartet. In a record shop in Crete, I discovered PM Records' CD series (www.imrecords.net) airing the haunting, dead voices from early 20th-century Armenia, the Balkans, and a Greece that no longer exists.

Pros: Labels Antik, Blue Chopsticks, Charizmika a reactivated Delmont, Ershwile, Fractal, Gong, Nones, Oshibong Musok, Ritornel, 75 Ark, Tigerbeat65, CD Keepers, Blechtum from Blechtum, Kad606 Matinos, K1 Clayton (bombsdrops from the Bay), Vladislav

Deley, Gunter Müller, Keith Rowe, Milford Graves, Faust's Wurmhole Years box set, more electroacoustic treasures Richard Maxwell, Kenneth Gaburo (Pogus/Pier Henry box sets), Xenakis's Xenosopolis, Guillermo Gregorio (Acoustic Unheard Music Series), Ennio Morricone soundtracks (Dagored), 100 Years Of The Berlin Phonogramm-Archive box set (Wergo).

On stage: Krimmo Polytönen, Jim O'Rourke, Burrrt Friedman, Philip Jack at Paris Batofar, Colin in Barcelona and London Mega, Supersister, Sherwood at The Wire Sessions, Nobukazu Takekuma and Fern O'Bergin Dorosota-San Sebastian, Anti-Pop Consortium at Perleus, Huesca.

Other bits and bobs that oiled the wheels of the Octavo Digital Editions (www.octavo.com), Chrisa Island, Jane Lerner, Philip Sherburne, Betalogue, Richard Henderson, JARBR, and the CCAC's hospitality in San Francisco during the Rooms For Listening event, night dining with Terre Thaemslitz over the Bay Bridge.

Bigscore: Magnolia On Brother, Where Art Thou?, High Fiction, Milne Smallscreen, Book Books, Ian Sinclair's Asylum Print, Mike Barnes, Captain Beefheart, Miles Theodorakis, Journals Of Resistance, Dave Cavanagh, The Creation Records Story, Neil Stephenson, Cyronomicon Expo, Sonic Boom at the Hayward, William Blake at Tate Britain, Live In Your Head and Protest & Survive at the Whitehead, Buckminster Fuller at the Design Museum, the aquarium at Paris's Musée d'Orsay, the puppets at the Bilbao Guggenheim, Morton Subotnik for stones, sounds and unpredictable good humour.

Cans London becoming harder to live in for all sorts of reasons: violence, disaster, traffic, noise pollution, garbage, property prices. Another no-show summer in Northern Europe coupled with breakdown of environmental talks — and the pressing to report this as onerous. Cycles across the crowded roads during slow protests — like cars don't clog up the streets every day? Companies eating each other. The Turner Prize and any art involving dunks, personal effects and holiday snaps.

ROB YOUNG

The February issue of *The Wire* will be on sale on
Tuesday 30 January

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letters

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Screening a ride: the Chicago cab



Wire kinda town

David Keenan's November cover story, *Chicago Stones* (*The Wire* 201), was way cool, from Chicago's point of view. Rob Mazurek and Jeff Parker have worked very hard to establish their base in Chicago. It is also nice to see Thrill Jockey put out some New Music CDs. Jazz and New Music distribution has been a nightmare over the last two years. As founder and owner of Southport Records in Chicago, I also wanted to thank *The Wire* for its recent reviews and articles on several of our artists, the recent feature on Tatsui Aoki (issue 200) and your reviews of Hal Russell's *Albert's Lukaby* (197) and George Flynn's *Tomb* (193).

I know that the 'lean' of the piece was kind of an 'Empty Bottle/Northside' thing, but I wanted to add

some Chicago information. The AACM is very active and has many projects out on their own label AECO, you can also visit their Web page at www.aacmchicago.org. AECO CDs can be purchased from Cadence/North Country (www.cadencebuilding.com) or directly from the Chicago office. I am also sorry that we did not get a chance to meet David Keenan. Southport is one of the only minority owned CD labels and recording studios in the world and was founded way back in 1977, and we offer CDs via our Website (www.chicagosound.com) that are related and in print (eg by Tatsui Aoki and Malachi Favors, Don Moye, Joseph Jarman, Von Freeman, etc) Thank again for the fine work, it seems that *The Wire* knows more about Chicago than *The Chicago Tribune*.
Sparrow Southport Records, Chicago, USA

Wrong current

I am writing about the folk Primer (*The Wire* 202), which was read down the phone to me as I am in Ireland. Great idea, but unfortunately there is a complete mistake in the bit about Shirley Collins. It says that the compilation that I released of her recordings on Durtro was called *The Stars Are Marching Sadly Home* (incorrect — though that record, by Current 93, featured Shirley's last recording to date. The compilation I released by her is *Fountain Of Snow* (Durtro D1 CD)).
David Tibet via e-mail

Folk-electronica, anyone?

It was great to read Ed Baxter's post-woolly jumper, though provoking Primer on British folk music. It's a source of great amusement and amazement to myself and Tichish, the electronic band I play with, that nearly every laptop, number-crunching, knob-twiddling musician we come across has masses of folk music in their record collections. I anticipate an ambitious yet awkward collision of the two worlds in 2001, with singers belting out folk songs over micro-fragmented electronic soundscapes.

Kevin Hopper London

Overdue Rental reassessment

It was sad to read about the death of Robert Rental (*Bastream*, *The Wire* 202). You must be the only publication which has mentioned this sad news. Although, to my knowledge, Rental remained 'silent' after his short foray into the recording world (1977-80), it is ironic that the artists he was associated with went on to grander things, especially Daniel Miller, who is the head of the Mute label. Younger readers could rediscover the 'warts and all' one-sided live album that Rental recorded with Miller (aka *The Normal*) more than 20 years ago called *Live At West Runton Pavilion* (on Rough Trade). If any of *The Wire* journalists (or readers for that matter) know more about Robert Rental's recorded work, I think an article or a retrospective review would be a great read, while letting other people know about this 'forgotten' contributor to underground electronic music.

Tim Jones via e-mail

Accentuate the negative

Thank you for Mark Sinker's surface reading of my new book *The Ambient Century: From Mahler To Trance — The Evolution Of Sound In The Electronic Age* (Pratt Run,



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letters

The Wire 2021 In the words of King Crimson's Robert Fripp, it was "so positively negative"

Mark Prendergast London

Gender confusion

Just wanted to point out an error in the Soundcheck section of *The Wire 2021*. Chris Sharp writes, "All of these tracks were crafted in response to a biological idea: each contributor was invited to imagine himself (note: no women) as a molecule moving through a cell wall." He then goes on to mention Kevin Blechdon. Kevin is a female.

Seeta Peria Gangadharan via e-mail

Lost bearings

I enjoyed Ben Watson's review of the Ornette Coleman/*Naïve Lunch* performance in Belfast. (On Location: *The Wire 2021*), but surely *Interrace* represented William Burroughs's experiences in Tanger, Morocco, not Algiers? Do I get a free T-shirt for pointing out something like this?

John Kuhlman Columbia USA

If Josp Tito, engineer of the non-alignment pact, were still alive and a reader of *The Wire*, he would be surprised to learn — in the Boomerang review of Laback's *Krist Pad Troglovina* (*The Wire 2021*) — that Slovenia came under Soviet domination. At a push, he might concede a degree of Soviet engineering of human souls in his former Yugoslavia, at least until Laback threw a spanner in the works after he died.

Doubting Tomasz via e-mail

Nerdic humour

Being more famous in Norway, at least) for being locked in a car for a week, blowing things up and eating disgusting things on national TV and radio, I was quite surprised to see a review of Kristopher Schau and his *Remington Super 60* (*Electronica In Brief, The Wire 2021*) playing in millions of parody groups like Gartnerlogen, Hurra Torpedo and Datsun, it's hard to take the man very seriously. He is a funny comedian (or 'scientist' as he calls it when he, for example, eats 100 Fisherman's Friends at once), but hardly an adventurer in modern music. By the way, where did *Outer Limits* go? Thanks for a great magazine.

Audun Landmark, Bergen, Norway

The Outer Limits In Brief column returns this month; see page 74. Ed

Unknown pleasures

In response to Andy Fentem's letter (*The Wire 2021*), I'd like to say a big thank you for your magazine's free CDs, and for the fun and enjoyment I've had listening to them. Because of these CDs I've discovered other styles of music that I may not have

had the pleasure of listening to otherwise. Is that not what a sampler is for?

Mark Farmer West Midlands

Dancing in darkness

Re: *The review of Björk's SelmoSongs* (Soundcheck, *The Wire 2021*). In the first sentence, David Toop admits that he hasn't seen the film *Dancer In The Dark*, and that he has little desire to do so. Later in the review he states that *SelmoSongs* helps to convert the film from "a joke in bad taste." How can he state such a strong opinion about the film without having experienced it firsthand? If Mr Toop had any conflicts or prejudice that prevented him from seeing *Dancer In The Dark*, he should have been professional enough to hand the assignment off to someone else.

Alessandra Gillen Milwaukee USA

David Toop was reviewing the soundtrack album as an artefact in its own right, not Lars Van Trier's film. His involvement with its Cannes premiere was openly acknowledged in the review — Ed

Accountants are humans too

The usually reliable Edlen Pouncey is well wide of the mark in asserting (Soundcheck, *The Wire 2021*) that Kid A is more interesting than Radiohead's "regular grind" of "stadium rock orthodoxy." I too admire Kid A, and endorse Edlin's observations up to it. However, it is clearly inferior to the band's previous album, *OK Computer*, which is far from orthodox in its brave and complex blend of jagged introspection, intense balladry and towering, glacial songforms. For all its admirable qualities, Kid A is a comparatively minor piece of work.

In the same issue's review of Björk's *SelmoSongs*, David Toop makes a gratuitous slur at accountants and traffic wardens. Since I am an accountant who has been a *Wire* subscriber since 1995 and writes regularly for another music publication, I resent his implication that my views are of no consequence. If David would like to take this matter further, I would be delighted to meet him in my local car park to discuss his opinions on a more concrete basis.

Richard Rees Jones Brighton

Raise the veil

As a subscriber I've had my ups and downs with *The Wire*, but the downs have always been interesting, and the highs very high indeed. Each passing issue reminds me that I want to write regarding the lack of a critical overview of the work of Bryn Jones, aka *Musikmagazine*. Your *Mierzbow* piece was a fitting template, and the Art Ensemble Of Chicago Primer brought me around again to the question. After all, who was this guy? What happened to him? One suspects some terrible assassination, given his vehemence in Middle Eastern politics. He's one of the

biggest mysteries on my CD shelf. From a practical viewpoint, as an avid eBay trawler, I find myself sometimes frustrated with his many posthumous releases. Why are some older CDs going for \$100, while others, and great ones too (thank goodness), going for \$10? Should I plunge into the box of *Silk And Dogs*? What's in it? Is it nine CDs of crap like *Your Miles In Kibul* (with the exception of the third CD, which has a few redeeming qualities)? The deceased Jones has become a cottage industry, it seems, and as much as I love his work and would like to hear more, guidance is in order! Can you help? I seem to remember at least one other plea in your Letters section. Or is there a *Musikmagazine* issue I missed before subscribing? On another subject, I'd like to say that the last *Wire* Tapper CD was wonderful, and I'm still playing that first brilliant autobiographical out by The Fall for friends as an example of how a band (or a man, Mark Smith) can legitimately re-invent its content and remain completely true to its context. Marvellous.

Charles Henry Jones Little Rock, USA

Box Of Silk And Dogs was reviewed in issue 189. Ed

Wheels and worms turn

To the *Scolio* to see Godspeed You! Black Emperor! A two and a half hour instrumental set with scratchy visuals. An aurallusion refrain kept running through my brain: Pink Floyd's "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun." A thought when a wheel makes one full revolution not only has it moved forward, but it has also returned to where it began.

Andrew Chester London

Boy zone

Has the fairly recent trend of sad men forcing some displaced cow-eyed misrepresentation of themselves (or their youth) on us been documented or noted by anyone at *The Wire*? Kid606, Badly Drawn Boy, Kid Koala, Kid A, the multitude of 'nourboy' names. Echoboy, Motorboy, at least six DJs in each of your readers' 'homelands with 'boy' appended in some way — I know of at least four in Bristol. Poor things.

Sascha Ostelboj/Kid Boyz2Men Bristol

Corrections

Issue 202. In the Zakir Hussain article, it was stated that Hussain's father, Ustad Allarakha Khan, died in December 1999. He actually passed away on 3 February 2000. Due to a subbing error, the review of Bob Ostertag's *Verbosim*, *Flesh And Blood* incorrectly stated that Ostertag's *Say No More* album was "partly" created from the instrumental and vocal techniques of Phil Minton. Gerry Hemmingsway and Mark Drescher of *It Should Have Rained* "entirely" in the *Multimedia*. Go To column, we stated that Jon Wozniak designed the *Mincinnorm* site. It should have been credited to At Recordings. □

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<< no watches. no maps >>

Figure 1. A schematic diagram of the experimental setup. The subject is seated in a chair, viewing a video screen. The screen displays a target (a small circle) and a starting point (a small circle). The subject's hand is positioned at the starting point. The distance between the starting point and the target is 10 cm. The subject is instructed to move their hand from the starting point to the target. The video screen is 100 cm high and 100 cm wide. The starting point is 50 cm from the bottom edge of the screen. The target is 50 cm from the top edge of the screen. The subject's hand is 50 cm from the bottom edge of the screen. The distance between the starting point and the target is 10 cm. The subject is instructed to move their hand from the starting point to the target.

[illegible]

Some of these units will work with us in the future, but for the most part with already considerable efforts committed, we don't have the time to properly pursue further relations with them. Hopefully their inclusion in the competition will increase their visibility, help them find the outlets and supporters they need to solidify success.

But not the trade group itself. "We are expanding this project because of the '92 initiative. A certain dedication is given to low tariff benefit for the benefit of people and some information which we are continuously adding." Although this we are coming a part of information that gets to simplify the whole process of releasing a record / CD / etc. providing detailed information about each stage of the process (from planning to distribution and having a short detail for a wide range of service providers (touring, recording, manufacturing, etc.) distribution, marketing, copyright, etc., internal aspects, etc.). We hope that this will provide a useful resource for those interested in the CD/DVD.



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Barbara Morgenstern

Home entertainer

"I love music that breaks my heart!" exclaims Berlin-based singer/songwriter/keyboardist Barbara Morgenstern, attempting to articulate a common denominator linking such disparate inspirations as No Means No, PJ Harvey, Radiohead, Sepultura, Prince and The Police with her own mood works. Singing in a deceptively plain yet ultimately mesmerizing voice, Morgenstern accompanies herself on the kind of old East German home organ-cum-beatbox you used to hear in the former DDR's better appointed restaurants and bars. Her first album, *Vermona E76-1* (1998), named after that compact marvel of socialist entertainment technology, carries an additional poignant twist in the way the antique resonances of her compact instrument partly locate her quirkily romantic songs in a lost era of black marketeers, off-duty conscripts, down-at-heel bar hostesses and sleazy Western tourists with East German Marks to burn. With backup production from the likes of Stefan 'Pole' Betke, Thomas Fehrmann and To Rococo Rot's Robert Lipok, her recently released second album *Fjordlen* makes it clear, however, that her idiosyncratic invention is driven by her own personality rather than the *Vermona's* pumping beatbox rhythms.

Morgenstern was born in the West German steel town of Hagen. She put her childhood music lessons to good use, first with Hamburg indie groups, and later in the mid-90s Berlin lo-fi movement known as the

Wohnzimmer (living room) scene. Either going out alone with tape backing or with her later group, featuring Christian Obermaier and Michael Muhlhausen (now with Hamburg songsters Blumfeld), her gigs generated a considerable buzz, which she consolidated with a cassette release, *Enter The Partyzone* (1996) and an EP, *Altskript* (1997, recorded with Muhlhausen).

The Wohnzimmer scene's cozy, unassuming yet playful DIY aesthetic captured the imagination of Gudrun Gut, formerly of pioneering Berlin women's groups Mania D and Malina, and current host of Ocean Club — a recording project club and radio show all at once. Indeed, Gut was so taken with the scene that in 1997 she founded the Monika label to release one of its acts, Quarks. Monika, named after Gut's deceased girlfriend, operates a woman-friendly policy, signing outfits with at least one female member, such as Quarks, Contrivè and Koniet. Gut also put out the Wohnzimmer compilation that first brought Morgenstern to her attention. On the Monika imprint, Morgenstern has released both *Vermona E76-1* and a set of largely faithful remixes called *Fan No 1* by Morgenstern herself (with Obermaier and Muhlhausen) and Robert Lipok, alongside more radical deconstructions by the likes of Koniet, Heimtrainer and Schlammpeitzger, as well as her second album proper, *Fjordlen*. By way of tribute to her label boss's former group, Morgenstern split a single with Chicks On Speed featuring their covers of Malina's "Kaltes Klare Wasser."

Morgenstern's albums are often up to two thirds instrumental, furthermore, she usually composes the music before setting her lyrics to it. However, her concerts feature more of her vocals. "On stage, I am more payable for audiences as an [actual] person, so naturally the focus is on vocals," she explains. "The

studio singing situation is very special, more controlled. Live, I am less self-conscious."

On *Fjordlen*, she expands her vocal palette by singing in different registers or processing her voice to resemble a gospel shouter. Writing mostly in her native German, the part English lyrics of "Happy End" (not to be confused with the Brecht/Hauptmann/Weill songspiel) might strike some cynics as a bid for broader acceptance. "The song is about the great myth of the happy end, which is predominantly invented and re-invented by American film culture," Morgenstern posits. "That's why the chorus is in English — as an expression of a 'universal' truth, the international belief in the happy end." Of course it's important for me to sing in my mother tongue, as I have the best command of it. Singing in German was an important step for me, to find my own style without resorting to clichés, while in English I was very susceptible to those clichés." Morgenstern's wariness of happy endings and facile solutions figures not only in her lyrics but also in her melancholy, minor key compositions. Perhaps they're the inevitable result of all those adolescent hours spent listening to Joy Division, New Order and Bauhaus in a "dark room"; as she jokingly remembers. Indeed, *Fjordlen* is a darker work than *Vermona*, what with its Morricone-like harmonicas howling in the distance and elegiac French impressionist style piano, as opposed to the earlier album's predominance of Old School beats and chirpy synth lines.

Morgenstern's next release will mark a turning point, as it dispenses with the services of her signature instrument. "The *Vermona* was a grateful instrument, simple but quite rich," she concludes. "However, I am always looking for new sounds. But I will definitely stick with keyboards and am now putting together my new equipment."

NATALIE GRAYHORN *Fjordlen* is out now on Monika

Ko Ishikawa

Sho of strength

The blues harmonica has long been associated with poverty and melancholy — earthy realises of the hard life, the moaning wail of a distant train. But now it turns out that the harmonica has an aristocratic cousin in Japan, where a style of mouth organ is on intimate terms with the Japanese emperor, seen in the company of white-robed priests at Shinto shrines, performing at weddings, funerals and of course the emperor's official birthday. This is the sho, the mouth organ that went to heaven. The verbal bundle of bamboo pipes is traditionally thought to resemble the phoenix, and the sound is a refined, shimmering cluster of metallic notes that hovers, timeless and unearthly, like a cloud of fireflies. The sho's national musical context is gagaku, the oldest orchestral tradition in the world.

One of a new generation of gagaku players, 37 year old Ko Ishikawa is a leading virtuoso on the sho. A tenth century Japanese assemblage of drums, shawms, mouth organs and others, the gagaku can polarise listeners. Many find its harsh sound bracing, but it was also recently used on the soundtrack of a UK TV commercial for headache pills. I first heard Ishikawa on Canadian composer Sarah Peabbles' 1996 album, *Suspended In Amber* (Innova), which he opens with a glorious four minute solo, a model of pose and tranquility. Last year Ishikawa was the central presence on Otomo Yoshihide's *Coté de la lune* album on Tzadik, acclaimed by many as Otomo's finest release to date. What did it take to leap from traditional gagaku to the cutting edge of Otomo's explorations in electronics and improvisation?

"I have always enjoyed UK rock and Techno-related experimental music," he responds, "Bruce Gilbert, This Heat, Nocturnal Emissions, Autechre. Otomo is from the same generation, and listened to the same music, so I understood his music straight away. For ten years now I've been playing with Japanese composers: Toru Takemitsu, Makoto Morio, Toshi Ichihara, Mamoru Fujieda, Yuki Takahashi and Makoto Ichi. I also played John Cage's composition for sho, *ONE9*."

Unlike many Japanese traditional musicians, Ishikawa does not come from a musical family. "My father was a calligrapher, and very knowledgeable about Heian [tenth century] culture. Some of the calligraphy he was dealing with came from the same period as the classical tunes I play on the sho. I first heard gagaku when I was in my teens. Listening to this vast, almost erupting sound, I felt a new vision, a way of grasping time that was so different from the modern world. I was shocked to realise Japan had this kind of music, and that's when I started to learn gagaku."

A small number of Western composers have been attracted to gagaku and the sho, sometimes leading to a clash of cultures. But Ishikawa sees such a 'clash' from a performer's perspective. "There is some music by contemporary composers which is so hard to play,"

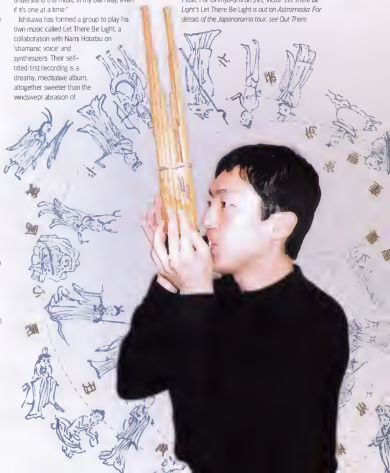
he relates, "because it depends on European theory and notation. They treat the instrument simply as a source of sound, and don't understand the instrument's particular timescale and physical limitations. By talking to composers, I try to help them appreciate better the physicality of the instrument."

In Japan today there is a mini-boom of interest in traditional music. Certain players of the *hichiriki* (gagaku shawm) and the earthy, blues-like strumming of the *tsugaru* shamisen are becoming familiar personalities on TV, not to mention the international success of the Kodo drummers. Ishikawa, however, takes the long view. "The Japanese music boom is quite superficial compared to Japan's colossal ignorance of its own traditional culture. I'm not expecting anything from this boom. I just want to increase the numbers who understand this music in my own way, even if it's one at a time."

Ishikawa has formed a group to play his own music, called *Let There Be Light*, a collaboration with Nami Horitsu on 'shamanic voice' and synthesizers. Their self-titled first recording is a dreamy, meditative album, altogether sweeter than the windswept abrasion of

gagaku. In January Ishikawa tours Britain with the Japanorama Contemporary Music Network tour, featuring a group of ten or so musicians selected by Otomo. The latter's *Cathode* album represents one aspect of what they will be playing. "The *Cathode* group creates very delicate music," says Ishikawa. "By placing a sine wave and a single sho note together, and changing the note slightly, you create a minute beat — then the music expands in three dimensions."

At the other end of the time continuum, Ishikawa's traditional context is the gagaku orchestra *Reigakusya*, led by pioneering researcher Sukeyasu Shibata. "I'm interested in music which is right on the frontier of time," he concludes, "as well as music from a thousand years ago. They shine upon each other, and throw light onto each other." **CLIVE BELL**, *Reigakusya* Eno/Peter Schwalm's *Musik For Ommy-Ju* is on JVC Victor. Let There Be Light's *Let There Be Light* is out on Astronorma. For details of the Japanorama tour, see *Out There*.



Thomas Lehn

Analogue rogue

"The quality of music depends primarily on how sounds are set in relationship," suggests Thomas Lehn, "less upon the medium by which the sounds are created." The medium currently favoured by this Cologne-based musician is a vintage analogue synthesizer, in solo performance and a series of inspired collaborations; he has turned that apparatus to his own ends, generating bristling flurries of electronic sound which other improvising musicians have recognised as a stimulus and a challenge to their own creativity. His solo activity has most recently been documented on the compelling CD *Feldstarken*. His collaborators have included drummer Gerry Hemingway, saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, guitarist Eugene Chadbourne, Pluramion's Marcus Schmickler, multi-instrumentalist Tim Hodgkinson and percussionist Roger Turner in Konk Pack, and trumpeter Axel Dörner and vocalist Phil Minton in Toot. Both of those trios will be touring in spring 2001. The impact of Lehn's synthesizer sound is immediate and physical, but he views it as part of a bridge, not just an isolated grid. "To me the essence of music is basically beyond any instrument. What makes music an exciting, satisfying, deeply touching experience is not the sound itself. It's the more or less complex relationship of sounds. Even with a non-instrument, it is possible to create a deep musical experience."

Lehn's aim is communication: that's not to be confused with Easy Listening accessibility. His aim is to divine a spring of responsiveness in his listeners and collaborators that lies at a level beyond the reach of well-worn formulas. Inclusiveness is his starting point. "I'm open to any kind of musical material, as long as I

find a meaningful, balanced way to integrate it into the musical context," he avers. "For me the most satisfying music occurs when you get into that kind of state when you can't play otherwise than you do. Each musical step in the performance's present time is logically yet magically connected to its past and its imminent future. In those moments of inspiration there's a kind of touching, where each listener is at the same time connected to that magical thing happening between the sounds and their structure's complexity, and to the depths of their mind and soul as well. You can't plan these moments or force them to happen."

Lehn trained as a classical pianist. He still performs in that capacity and as an interpreter of contemporary compositions. "The piano gave me an opportunity for insight into music: its vertical and horizontal architecture," he explains. He has approached the keyboard not as an end in itself, to be mastered then flouted, but as a means of access to the internal processes of music. It has enabled him to acquire through experience forms of understanding which are diluted when received secondhand. He asserts:

"Working through something by doing is different from listening to a reproduction by someone else, and offers other, very direct possibilities to discover the music's structural relationships from the smallest to the largest formal dimensions."

He values the cross-fertilisation resulting from applying his immersion in composed forms to improvising contexts. He has played in jazz groups too, including workshops with George Russell, Günter Hampel and Keith Tippett, and although he does not feel that he is a jazz musician by nature, the jazz experience also informs his more abstract work. Intriguingly, he was not drawn to synthesizers by exposure to other electronic music. His first encounter with live electronics was a 1980 concert by

percussionists Paul Lytton and Paul Lovens in Cologne. Lehn was impressed by Lytton's use of self-made electronic instruments and the interplay between the duo. He has subsequently worked with both musicians. He also recalls the excitement he felt watching David Tudor in the same city later in that decade. But he insists there is no direct relationship between witnessing those performances and the course he has subsequently taken. He started using the analogue synthesizer for more prosaic reasons: "Some venues didn't have a piano," he comments, "so I took my old Minimoog, tried it and discovered how well and naturally its sounds can be integrated into an ensemble sound with other acoustic instrumentalists. Initially I worked with both. At some point I found less is more, and started to use only the synthesizer in improvised contexts, continuing playing piano as an interpreter. That felt a more clear situation to me."

Lehn readily acknowledges an affinity with Jim Baker, a pianist and analogue synthesizer player based in Chicago, where they performed as a duo two years ago. More recently he has played in Keith Rowe's *Mimeo* (Music In Movement Electronic Orchestra), an alignment of 12 players wielding a range of electronic instruments simultaneously, who are scheduled to appear at next year's *Angelica Festival* in Barcelona. Lehn is excited by this expansion of his musical horizons, but he feels it is salutary to earth himself by recalling the eminently practical decision which led to it: "I didn't start to play the synthesizer because I wanted to do electronic music," he concludes. "When I started to use the synthesizer I didn't define myself as someone who is doing electronic music. And still today I would put the accent more on music than on electronic." **JULIAN COWLEY** *Feldstarken* is out now on Random Acoustic's *Wink*. *Is Marcus Schmickler's* *Bait* is out on *Entwurm*.



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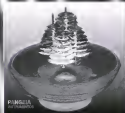
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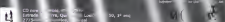
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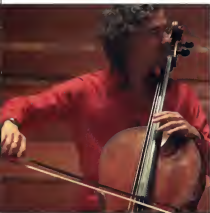
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Charles Curtis

Sinewave subversive

"It's actually hard to explain the appeal of sinewaves," puzzles composer and regular La Monte Young sparring partner Charles Curtis, attempting to pin down why this almost tactile waveform exerted such a pull on so many sound thinkers in the late 20th century. "Insofar as they represent a kind of nucleus of sound itself — or the most basic, elemental material from which complex sound builds outward — they could be seen as a mystical key to the mystery of sound. The ear would be the organ which is given to us to receive the mysterious vibration and the brain, the organ through which we reflect on it."

In 1998, Curtis issued his longform drone meditation, *Ultra White Violet Light/Sleep*, on the German independent Beau Rivage in a vinyl run of just 512 copies. It disappeared almost immediately quickly becoming one of the most treasured sound art objects of the last few years. Four sides of vinyl — each containing minimal combinations of waveforms, cellos, guitar/bass/drums, gut/jamming and hilariously deadpan narration — were designed to be played simultaneously, creating a sensual, disorienting depth of field. Here was a portable sound installation that recalled the Velvet Underground as much as Terry Riley. Now US label Souzai has made it more readily available, this time in CD as well as vinyl formats.

The classically trained Curtis was "encouraged from an early age by his family to study the cello. I grew up in a very strict household," he remembers during an e-mail exchange. "I had a very Old World European mom and a high school teacher dad and we were very middle class. We had strict table manners and cloth napkins and placemats and knee stockings but this was Southern California — a little beach town full of hippies and bikers

and surfers — so there was a contradiction there. As kids, my brother and I had to play music for guests and do recitals. We were talented and loved the music making, but there was tension beneath the surface." Curtis first experienced rock music "almost subconsciously." With his parents all but banning it from the house he would rely on catching bobbing little snatches of Jimi Hendrix or The Beatles' *Abbey Road* while out and about. "I thought it was pretty eerie," he recalls, "but very riveting."

By the early 80s, when he was 18, he moved to New York, where he fell in with the collective of oddball musicians based around Kramer's Shmymysdc label, among them Dogbow and King Missile. More significantly, he began working with La Monte Young, who considers Curtis to be "the foremost interpreter of my music in the world." "I learnt so much from La Monte," Curtis reciprocates. "His total focus on what he's doing, his uncompromising devotion to his art and the intensity with which he makes music and lives his life. He is one of the really rare ones, and to be this close is inspiring."

Curtis is one of the few players to have regularly worked in duos with Young. "In every case it was one of the high points of my experience as a performer," he asserts. "There was one memorable day when we were rehearsing in Frankfurt with Ensemble Modern. In one of the breaks, La Monte asked me to hold a fifth and he began to sing just for pleasure, in the 'collaged' technique of Indian classical music. He was really enjoying himself, moving between various ragas and modes, and the other musicians were just standing around or drifting in and out of the room — and there we were, just sitting together jamming on one fifth and the Indian modes that he can sing so beautifully. It was casual but very intense and personal, a momentary thing that just happens to happen once in a long while."

Besides his drone work, Curtis also leads his own rock group, The Charles Curtis Trio, and regularly collaborates with the likes of Alan Licht, Dean Roberts and Borbetomagus's Donald Miller. Indeed, the noise of New York has influenced his work in unexpected ways. "It's perhaps more of a Taoist reinterpretation," he explains, "constant noise and frenetic activity being a sustained reflective experience. This is what I felt when I began to hear the really great heavy New York noise groups like Borbetomagus. It seemed to me not a simulation of city noise and urban grime but its transcendent phenomenon. In fact I think that Borbetomagus at their best are great manakats."

As the cover art makes clear, Curtis is fascinated by sound in space, architecture as frozen music. "I think you feel good in good architectural space just as you feel good in good music," he says. "Good architecture makes the individual feel free and at ease with himself. It's not enough to look good or be thought provoking or hi-tech or super convenient. It's got to give you a free, open, flowing feeling. In music it's similar. I don't care for music that is teaching me something, preaching to me or toying with my emotions. I want it to be open and free and I want to move around in it."

DAVID KEENAN *Ultra White Violet Light/Sleep* is out now on Souzai

bitstream

Syncretizing dreams, Tony Conrad has produced a triple CD set of early **John Cale** treasures tapped from the velvet goldmine called John Cale New York in The 1960s, featuring Conrad, underplayed NYC minimalist Terry Jennings and Cale's sometime Velvet Underground colleagues, the late Angus Macneise and Sterling Morrison. The three discs, set for release by Table Of The Elements, are satirically titled *Sun Blindness Music*, *Dream Interpenetration* and *The Dream Syncretic Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*. Vinyl: **Yod** American ecstatic jazz label Eremite has teamed up with writer Byron Coley's Father Yod Enterprises to launch the vinyl-only imprint **Morejazz/Rainbow**, specializing in direct master LPs pressed up in limited runs of 500. They will only be available by mail order (www.eremite.com) or at Eremite-related live events. First up is *Yod's First Awest*, with releases by Jeter Brodman and the late Glenn Spearman to follow. On a related note, S/N's Thurston Moore and Coley have launched their online Ecstasy: Yod Store (www.yod.com) for new, rare and second-hand vinyl, CDs and underground literature. **Deadly snickerboke** So-I author **Jeff Moon's** forthcoming book *Cobrinatus* (out in February) uses dance music techniques to "sample" from Shakespeare, Thomas De Quincey and Zane Grey, and rema (them) using the "Cobrinatus Engine," producing poems, songs, prose and visuals. An animated sample from the book is available on an accompanying Website (www.cobrinatus.com). **Exact Change** the book imprint of US alt-rock stalwarts Darmon Krutewski and Naomi Yang (aka Darmon & Naomi), will publish the collected writings of composer Morton Feldman in a volume entitled *My Reports To Eighth Street* in February in America, and March in the UK. For info, go to www.exactchange.com. **Dead House** After only one release (John Fahey's excellent *Home*) Danny Lettrich has decided to shut down his pioneering **LiveHouse** label because of disillusionment with industry practices and ego conflicts. Now you know why we're all so bitter and twisted. **Virtual education: 010101** as the title and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's technology exhibition, the Web components of which go online just after midnight on New Year's Eve, involving 35 artists, architects and designers "responding to a world altered by the increasing presence of digital media and technology." The waterfront component opens in March, but **Nesherites** can sneak a look at www.museumofmodernart.org as soon as 2001 begins. **Final bulletin: Plaqueur Korrick** the Berlin promoter famous for post-industrial, electronic "interruption and music," has ceased operations due to a personal dispute between the three principals, Erik Ed. Beendard, Annabelle Pocco and Green-John Hahner. However, Beendard and Pocco have already founded a new agency called *Derse*, which will look after such labels as *As-Music*, *Alga Marghera*, *Grig*, *Mega*, *Song* and *Sulphur*. Contact DD 49 30 44 34 0290. Web: www.derse.de

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By the time we got to Terrastock:
Kate Village of Major Stars

Seattle

It's the first weekend of November, and Seattle is playing host to the fourth Terrastock festival, the Proleptic Terrastock 2002's now annual live event. 32 unpaid acts have crossed the globe, or at least the city of Seattle to play over three days. All that stands between me and a smorgasbord of experimental, psychedelic, drone rock, long lost cult heroes and unknown talent, are the immigration officials at Seattle airport.

An hour after landing, I'm sitting in a separate office, being interrogated by a man who doesn't believe anyone would travel all the way from England just to see a gig. West Coast customs officials never like me. Visiting Vancouver in 1994, my uncle asked me to bring him some pork scratchings, as they're unavailable in Canada. When I was taken aside and searched for drugs, they found instead 48 packets of the forbidden meat based import. My uncle and I were invited to eat as many scratchings as we could in the quarantined area. In a momentary lack of courage which I still regret, we declined.

Entering Seattle, I worry in case someone has planted bar snacks in my pocket. A search of my bags reveals the manuscript of a book I'm working on. The official flicks through it, luckily bypassing the human/animal sex scene, and tells me to surmise the plot. This doesn't help, although I realise there is a problem with chapter 12. He asks me who is playing at this year's Terrastock. I hand him the programme "Subacriod Space?" The Six Organs Of Admittance? Crime Syrcus? Ethereal Counterbalance? Is this some kind of joke? The presence of a name he's actually heard of enmeshes him further. "Country Joe?" is he still going?" he sneers, before finally freeing me. The taxi from the airport

crashes into a station wagon. I get a mild whiplash.

The travel tips on the festival's Website (www.terrascope.org) mean most punters and performers are staying at the Camlin Hotel. Familiar faces pass me in corridors. I feel like a delegate at some strange conference. Three willowy members of the Japanese acid folk outfit Ghost are standing outside my room smoking, fading to black leather shadows as the sun sinks behind the skyscrapers. During the 15 minute walk to the venue I see as many branches of Borders and Starbucks as there are posters protesting about them. First Avenue has strip clubs owned by empowered lapdancer collectives, the sea breeze blows over well stocked secondhand bookshops, and the evening stars shine down on a population perfectly poised to enjoy all the benefits of global capitalism, at the same time as having the satisfaction of complaining about them.

The Showbox is a beautiful old club in what passes for the sleazy area of the city's well-scrubbed streets. Last year, Terrastock was held in England, at the University of London Union, where straightlaced student bars lent an almost academic air. In contrast, the Showbox looks like the club Peter Dinklage stumbles into in a Roger Corman LSD movie. Two stages are set up opposite each other, liquid light shows flicker and live camera feeds form fascinating backdrops. All that's missing are the hippy go-go girls, supplanted instead by an international audience of forlane editors, record shop owners and true believers, acquainting themselves with the space they're about to spend the best part of the next three days in.

Terrastock's diversity is almost its undoing. It's asking a lot of an audience to refocus their attention, in the mere minutes it takes to swap stages, from the spiritdrone of guitar duo Wendy & Carl to the rock 'n' roll theatrics of Mudhoney's garage band spin-off, The

Monkeywrench, one of the highlights of the first night. But there's an element of trust in the Terrastock brand name that means the crowds give everything a chance. And all sets are only 45 minutes long anyway, which felt like enough time for continents to form during Velvet Underground fifth fiddle Doug Yule's spot, but passed with disheartening speed for local psych-pop stars The Green Pajamas. Jetlag caught up with me on Friday night, and I fell asleep on the floor during the impenetrable Metal of Soundgarden spin-off Wellwater Conspiracy, waking up hours later bewildered and confused to the sound of Charalambides, a Texan guitar trio who combined free improvisatory noodling with whale song vocals. They were uncharacteristic, introverted and playing to a crowd who had largely come to see Grunge rock survivors in action. But, in a typical Terrastock magic moment, the Showbox was silent with wonder.

After 30 minutes of 65, 60, 55, 50, 45, 40, 35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10, 5, 0, Wayne Rogers showing that there's still an alchemy to be worked from the base elements of overdrive, garage rock, The Minus Five, the hobby group of Young Fresh Fellow Scott McCaughey and REPT's Peter Buck, confused to a cover of The Nightcrawlers' 1967 hit "Little Black Egg" in their set to the delight of the record collector faction, and then hurried off to play a Parent Teacher Association benefit, Moe Tucker's trademark fuses nervously closed another varied night.

On Sunday morning, over breakfast, I learned who makes the world's best thermoses from members of The Luthers, and watched Bevis Frond frontman Nick Saloman become a small, starstruck boy again in the presence of Country Joe & The Fish keyboardist David Cohen. Sunday afternoon began with Delicate AWOL, a South London quartet who play post-rock with a pop sensibility, if such a thing is possible, and have it in them to take abject weariness to the masses. It was soon after their set that Terrastock began to eat itself. Now, admittedly, I'd drunk a lot of Pacific Northwestern coffee by that stage, but I thought I detected discontented rumbles from the under-thr-thous about the presence of Bardo Pond, signed as they are, to the global corporate giant that is Metastard Records. And when folk rock duo Damon & Naomi took the stage with Major Stars as Children Of The Rainbow, all dressed in white kaftans, to perform a parody of the later work of acid rock exile Merrill Farkhauser, I worried that Terrastock, as well as being a throndly family, can represent a small community having a closed dialogue with itself.

The Bevis Frond were the perfect antidote, following a set backing Country Joe with their combination of battery acid guitar solos and classic songwriting. And when Somerset In The Alchemists closed the show, invoking The Stooges and The Quicksilver Messenger Service simultaneously, any doubts evaporated in waves of pure pleasure. On Monday morning, waiting for delayed flights back to London, I was making plans for Terrastock V. **STEWART LEE**



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FLOWER POWER

Since quitting his avant rock outfit Gastr Del Sol, **David Grubbs** has blossomed into one of America's most idiosyncratic songwriters, grafting experimental poetics onto minimalist drones to create bizarre yet beautiful pop hybrids. Words: Christoph Cox. Photos: Mattias Ek

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is an urban oasis: 52 acres of esplanades, overlooks, woods and walks in the heart of New York City's largest borough. Its most celebrated offering is the Cranford Rose Garden, a glorious compendium of antique and modern specimens bearing the most prodigal and evocative names: Starwell Perpetual, Rise 'N' Shine, Hurdy Gurdy, Buff Beauty, Autumn Damask. It's enough to transport a beleaguered city dweller into poetic reverie. At least if you are David Grubbs.

In the year and a half since he left Chicago's musical hothouse and headed for New York, Grubbs has spent more than his share of time wandering among the Cranford's ramblers, floribundas, polyanthus and grandifloras. Traces of his visits — place names and floral nomenclature — are left all over *The Spectrum Between*, Grubbs' most recent, most sensuous and satisfying record. Like Jim O'Rourke, his former partner in the avant rock outfit Gastr Del Sol, Grubbs has temporarily set aside his deconstructionist tendencies and made a lush and syrupy pop record. *The Spectrum Between* bears his trademark assemblage of serpentine guitar figures, minimalist drones and clever verbal fragments, but it bathes them in bossa nova stylings, languorous horns and the dazing hollows of perfect pop.

"Can you believe that PJ Harvey is trying to get away with a 'falling in love and moving to New York' record? Geez, that bus already left!" he spouts with a laugh. "*The Spectrum Between* is a much happier record because of things that happened in my personal life." But despite his good humour and amorous intoxication, Grubbs is finding New York a puzzling and difficult place to live, a sharp contrast with Chicago's easy living and artistic cross-fertilisation. "The Chicago music scene was a hell of a scene. I haven't found anything comparable to that in music here. Everything seems so geographically dispersed in New York. Or maybe I'm just geographically dispersed," he chuckles. "I'm trying to figure out what kind of scene I want to be involved in here. I feel like I'm becoming a part of the fabric of this area very slowly."

It's an unusual feeling for Grubbs, who has spent the greater part of his life working in conspicuously communal and cooperative music scenes. Trace the membership of those scenes and you have a genealogy that reveals a direct lineage between punk rock and post-rock (or "post-punk," as he prefers to call it).

Scene One: The punk rock scene in the East End of Louisville, Kentucky, early 1980s. "Oh, it's completely a generationally defining thing for me," Grubbs notes, recalling his punk rock adolescence. "It really happened when the movie *The Decline of Western Civilization* started showing in Louisville. Suddenly, this type of music that had been derisively called 'LA Punk' became hardcore," and the 14 and 15 year olds were like, "This is our moment! It felt like a huge musical moment," he muses. "I don't ever expect to be so unambiguously, generationally spoken to again." He was among those 14 year olds, as were his friends Will and Ned Oldham, Dave Pajo, Brett Wolford, and Brian McMahon — future members of Slint, Palace, Tortoise and Papa M. With McMahon, Wolford and others, he formed the hardcore live piece Squirrel Bark, who shared the stage with Husker Du, Big Black and The Meat Puppets and put out two acclaimed records — all before graduating from high school.

Interlude: Grubbs spent a few years away at college in Washington DC studying politics and journalism. On a visit to New York's legendary punk rock club CBGB's, he ran into future Tortoise drummer John McEntire and began a long distance collaboration under the name Bastro.

Scene Two: The post-rock scene in Chicago's Wicker Park, early 1990s. By the end of his college stint, Grubbs had traded politics for poetry. In 1990 he headed off to graduate school at the University of Chicago to pursue a doctorate in literature. "I started off by studying modern and contemporary poetry," he recalls, "writing about Ezra Pound, Louis Zukofsky and George Oppen. And then I started to write about John Cage." Cage's writing, and eventually Cage's music, Grubbs wasn't the only one who was discovering the Cagean tradition of experimental music. That sort of revelation marked an entire network of Chicago musicians — among them McEntire, who had recently moved there, future Tortoise colleague Bundy Brown and Jim O'Rourke, who were beginning to interrogate basic rock assumptions and to experiment with electronics, Ambient textures, minimalist grooves and free improvisation.

For nine years, Grubbs lived a double life, shuttling back and forth between Chicago's North and South Sides, from Wicker Park's arty fringe to the stodgy University culture in Hyde Park. "The mix between music and academia was something that I was constantly negotiating," he recalls. "It was weird. I was always kind of removed. I mean I was busy in grad school, for a long time. So even though I was toward the centre of that nexus of musicians, I wasn't the most sociable or gregarious one of the bunch. Even though I lived a couple of blocks from the Ramba Club, you wouldn't be accused of finding me there."

Within this newfound academic and artistic milieu, he came to reexamine his musical commitments. Perhaps inspired by Cage, he began questioning that most basic rock axiom that volume, speed and aggression aptly signified cultural and political authority and innovation. "I remember becoming incredibly sick of playing really loud music," Grubbs recalls. "I mean, the scale for loud music is relatively narrow — the quietest moments in a live Bastro performance were really fuckin' loud. I just remember playing venues that were completely inappropriate for music, of that volume and there was nothing we could do to react to it. I started thinking, 'It has to work on a human scale, it can't be the pumped up Marvel Comics thing.' The very last Bastro tour happened right when Nirvana's *Nevermind* came out," he continues. "By the end of that six week tour I thought, 'Wow, maybe I should buy an acoustic guitar and get back into playing the piano.' I had such a visceral reaction to hearing that kind of stuff. It just seemed like steroid music to me. So the first Gastr Del Sol record was sort of like a unilateral disarmament."

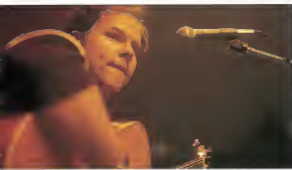
Retaining the same personnel (Grubbs, McEntire and Bundy Brown), Bastro was rechristened Gastr Del Sol (after 1982 Kentucky Derby champion racehorse Gato Del Sol) and given a new modus operandi: to quietly yet resolutely dismantle the rock song. The trio's first release, *The Serpentine Similar*, offered a tentative assemblage of brooding fragments that seemed deliberately to thwart coherence. Grubbs's vocal cut-ups, collections of piano chords, noisy interruptions and intertwined guitar and bass arpeggios — all placed side by side without introduction, transition or resolution.

McEntire and Brown soon began working in Tortoise, and Grubbs found a new collaborator in Jim O'Rourke. "Right about the time the first Gastr Del Sol record came out, Jim called me up — we had friends in common and said, 'We should get together and play, maybe in like a loud rock band.' I think he must have been thinking of Fushitusha or Bastro or something like that. And so the first couple of Gastr Del Sol get-togethers with Jim were just godawful sledgefest jams. And then we put down the guitars and started razing one another's recorded collections. I put on *The Serpentine Similar* and he said, 'Oh yeah, this is what we should be doing!'



Over the next four years, the duo put out five records — some of the most astonishing and intriguing records of the 1990s. Weaving their influences on their sleeves, O'Rourke and Grubbs paid tribute to an odd collection of musical heroes and styles: John Fahey's minimalist folk, Tony Conrad's abrasive string drones, electronic noise à la David Behnen, Luc Ferrari's musique concrète, and lavish arrangements à la Van Dyke Parks and Jack Nitzsche. What would prevent all of these influences from expressing themselves in a single song? Nothing but the desire for consistency, concord and coherence. *Gastr Del Sol* seemed to answer. And they set to work without these constraints. Of course, the project wreaked havoc on the traditional structure of the rock song. But that was par for the course. "Jim and I felt very mischievous, like, 'OK, we'll do a 30-second song and a six-minute coda, yeah, yeah.' Kind of like a Lynyrd Skynyrd joke," Grubbs jokes. "You know, get the singing out of the way so you can get to the guitar solos. But, seriously, that was one of the purposes of *Gastr Del Sol*. It was a very explicit thing, very much decided in advance." Was it primarily a polemical or critical gesture? "Nah," he answers with a smile, sounding more like a circus hawk than a gloomy ideologist, "just to confound, amuse, amaze and delight."

"It got less contrarian and mischievous towards the end," he notes. "The last record, *Carnouleur*, was largely about releasing the self-censorship mechanisms, you know, like, 'OK, we should make a record that would be really nice to listen to.' O'Rourke provided a lush backdrop of strings, horns and warped electronics, while Grubbs belted out vocal tracks reminiscent of Neil Young's more grandiose moments in Buffalo Springfield.



For a lot of post-rockers, scrapping rock n' roll ideology has meant firing the lead singer and either burying the vocals or dispensing with them entirely. "These days, it's certainly not necessary to be writing lyrics," Grubbs acknowledges. "Instrumental music can survive just fine on its own. It might even be easier not to be writing lyrics." But, for his own part, he remains committed to the singer and the song. "You're in love with the sound of your own voice," his mother used to say," he recalls, with a smile. "And yeah, I like the sound of my own voice. I like my own handwriting. I like to write. In some ways, writing lyrics is one of the things I do best. I guess I still think of myself as a literature person."

Despite his commitment to the pen and the voice, Grubbs's lyrics and singing make their own contributions to rock deconstruction. In lieu of deep personal expression and linguistic transparency, he's fond of writing lyrics that foreground language itself and the process of constructing meaning. For examples, just leaf through the lyric pages of almost any Grubbs offering. On *Gastr Del Sol*'s "Eight Corners," he simply recites a select list of Chicago and Louisiana street names. Extended catalogues of flowers and paint colours make a prominent appearance on *The Spectrum Between*. And the text for Carnouleur's "A Puff Of Dew" was generated in a computer's word processor, by running a German vocabulary list through an English spellchecker.

This lyrical sensibility has perplexed and even infuriated Grubbs's audiences. Yet his strategies carry on rich traditions in 20th-century American poetry, from Cage's

mesostics and the 'Objectivist' efforts of Zukofsky and Oppens to the work of 'Language Poets' such as Bob Perelman and Charles Bernstein. Grubbs himself offers less academic, more experiential explanations: "My fondness for serial or catalogue form stems from the fact that extremely simple arrangements — alphabets, station, imagined street intersections, hybrid produce — admit for almost embarrassingly rich language. It's all so extravagant, these street names and names of shades of green and names of roses. When the basic word material is that rich, that over the top, I find myself opting for a comma rather than a verb."

Of late, when Grubbs hasn't been writing songs, he's been collaborating on a number of drone-based minimalist projects. "For me, it's not some programme of historical reconstruction or retrieval," he explains. "I just simply love the roar of the drone. I like playing minimal music in the same way that others like to play rockably."

He acquired his taste for minimalism half a decade ago, while working on a series of projects with Tony Conrad for the Table Of The Elements label. Shortly after, Grubbs bought himself a harmonium, a bellows-driven reed organ long out of fashion in the West but immensely popular in Indian music. "I like improvising with it in a way that I don't particularly like improvising with the guitar," he notes. "I spend so much of my time writing music on the guitar that I confuse these functions when I'm trying to improvise on it. The harmonium has such a limited harmonic range — you play it with one hand. There's also such a nice sustain on the instrument, so you're not only listening to the harmonic relationships, you're listening to the breathing of the instrument. And since the tuning is usually off, when you play octaves or fifths, you usually hear beatings."

Grubbs's harmonium makes a fine appearance on *Primalordial*. Left, the sublime new record by Pauline Oliveros (also on Table Of The Elements). It's even more in evidence on *Apertum*, a duo CD with Swedish reed improviser Mats Gustafsson, and on "Aux Noctambules," Grubbs's mesmerizing duet with French guitarist Noël Akchiche. Across this series of peacocks, he and his partners generate drones and tones that drift and sway, bending this way or that, but always returning to the throbbing centre. As he sees it, it's all about tracking one's sense of clock time — about a kind of immersion that disrupts normal perception of durations.

When Grubbs was asked by Paris's Centre Pompidou to contribute a work for its Elysian Fields exhibition last summer, he submitted a musical clock, an hour-long piece loaded into a CD player set in repeat mode. It begins with a typically Grubbsian melody that eventually fades into musical tick-tocks of various timbres and then re-emerges at regular intervals throughout the hour. It's an extraordinarily simple and elegant composition that nicely exploits the long playing time of CDs and the CD player's capacity for infinite repetition. And it's a perfect vehicle for Grubbs, foregrounding the helix-like quality of his guitar playing, the way in which, like an analogue clock, his phrases always cycle back upon themselves, at once forward moving and repeating.

A number of other new and recent projects have been keeping Grubbs busy. His Blue Chopsticks imprint is set to release a new composition by Luc Ferrari, and it has just resusciated *The Coccobis*, his 1998 operetta originally released on French label Rectangle. In the vein of Bob Dylan's soundtrack to Pat Garrett and Billy The Kid, the Coccobis presents an adaptation of a story by Stephen Crane and stars Grubbs as the Swede, an ill-fated foreigner who blusters through the Wild West. Between steady gigs as a freelance journalist, he has also been touring with Mayo Thompson's longstanding psychedelic collective, the Red Krayola, and working on a new batch of songs of his own.

All the while, he's still adjusting to the daily pressures and opportunities of New York City life. "Since I've moved to New York, I really haven't been going to see live music," he says. "I mean, the same people play here that play in Chicago, but it's more expensive — much more expensive — and it takes longer to get there. But galleries are fantastic here. How can you not be interested in contemporary art if it's so available, just as if you live in Wicker Park, how can you not be interested in that fantastic music that's in your backyard? I'm very happy being here. I mean, it's really different." The Spectrum Between is out on Drag City. *Apertum* and *The Coccobis* are out on Blue Chopsticks. *Aux Noctambules* 3' CD is available from Rectangle.



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November 1965 in the wake of the withdrawal of funding from poet, publisher and black activist LeRoi Jones's Black Arts Repertory Theatre in New York's Harlem district, militant freedom drummer Sunny Murray calls a machine-gun studio summit, boldly proclaiming it Sonny's Time Now. All the young bloods heed the call — saxophonist Albert Ayler, trumpeter Don Cherry, bassists Henry Grimes and Louis Worrell, and Jones himself regroup for a magical war council, a séance where they seek to bring down upon themselves mastery of the Blackest Arts and so raise the skies of America with the stream of their music. As Murray dynamites his snare drum, and Ayler and Cherry fire off rounds of weeping bullets, Jones sets the charges "We want poems that kill," he trumpets "Poems that shoot guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys and take their weapons leaving them dead with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland."

As a direct response to the murder of Malcolm X earlier in the same year, LeRoi Jones had led an artistic exodus from the costly bohemian, rent-a-beatnik environs of

Greenwich Village up to Harlem in an attempt to instill a revolutionary, Black Nationalist consciousness in the artists and youth of the ghettos. By the autumn of 1965, the Black Arts students had already gone way past the theory stage, as evidenced by the cache of guns seized by the NYPD during a raid on the theatre, resulting in the plug swiftly being pulled on one of the 60s' most daring and inspirational attempts at total cultural revolution. All this at a time when racism was so ingrained even in the supposedly "hip" community that, a mere seven years previously, Jones had caused outrage by marrying the white poet and publisher Hettie Cohen. Their divorce in 1965 has since come to be seen as a defining moment in the history of the American civil rights struggle, symbolically marking the point where many young black people gave up any hope of a coalition with whites and moved towards separatism and, increasingly, the Nation Of Islam.

Jones took it all the way. In a complete severance with his past, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Amiri Baraka before leading the cavalry back up town

REVOLUTION

As a Beat-connected poet and publisher in mid-60s New York, **Amiri Baraka**, then known as **LeRoi Jones**, fomented a revolutionary consciousness among Harlem's free jazz army. Nowadays his executioner's song may be more tempered, but his jihad against cultural apathy remains in force. **Words: David Keenan. Photos: Joaquim Mendes**



Ushering in a new phase of his life, this act would see him cast as a lightning rod for the new, invigorated folk forms nurtured by the Black Arts. As an inspirational figure for the black community, Jones went on to publish and promote many fringe playwrights and poets, he also put on shows and gigs at community theatres, organised parades of the new music through Harlem, and even recorded and pressed records by some of the new trans of free — Sunny Murray, Albert Ayler, Donald Ayler, Sun Ra — on his own Jihad label. All the while, he kept up a career lecturing in American history (his *Blues People*, reprinted by Edinburgh's Payback Press, is now a key text in American colleges), writing and publishing his own poetry, plays and non-fiction, as well as continuing to record with the likes of The New York Art Quartet, with whom he celebrated a 35th reunion show last year.

Setting by a swimming pool at a hotel in Lisbon, Portugal during last summer's Jazz Em Agosto festival, slowly sipping beers and quizzing me excitedly about my Irish

background, it's hard to believe that there was a time when Baraka would have skinned my white ass and hung me from a lamppost. He looks tiny, dangling on a chair next to trumpeter Hugh Ragin, with whom he's on tour, blowing lucid choruses of verse over the latter's sumptuous jazz arrangements. His hunched frame, exaggerated by a puffed cream cap and coupled with his constantly watering eyes, make him look like an ageing Spike Lee. Ragin looks on proudly as Baraka rants and laughs his way through the interview, occasionally offering an encouraging "I can dig that", but clearly Baraka is dictating the mood. Every so often there's a no-bullshit flash as he cuts a question dead by banging on the table or slashing the air with an accusatory finger — just to let you know who's in control. Writer John F. Szwed makes the point in his thumping Sun Ra biography *Space Is The Place* that Baraka learned a good deal from Sun Ra, who turned him on to such key texts as *Astrology Space Age Science and God Wills The Negro*. Today, you can hear it in his speech, the way he rolls phrases round his cheeks as if trying to crack their phonetic code.

Andri Baraka in concert with The Hugh Ragin Quartet, Lobos, August 2000



I begin by taking Baraka back to the time when he was still known as LeRoi Jones, and was associated with many of the American Beat writers. In 1958, he and his wife Hettie founded *Yugen* magazine ("A new consciousness in arts and letters"), a vital platform for new pop prosody from the likes of Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, Gregory Corso, Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg. "A lot of people think of me in connection with that whole Beat thing," he concedes. "But I don't know — I mean I knew all those people and published those books, but the term 'Beat' is just a commercial thing and covers a lot of people doing different things, some of which is still important, some of which is bullshit. I mean, Allen Ginsberg was a brilliant man — I didn't agree with half the stuff he did, but I can uphold him as a genuine scholar and an important poet without a doubt. Certainly of all the so-called intellectuals that I met when I came to New York he was the most brilliant one — most of them were full of shit." Baraka's relationship with Jack Kerouac was particularly fraught, yet despite having to endure countless drunken brawls, Baraka did his best to support Kerouac's work. Although he rejected *Mexico City Blues*, Kerouac's greatest longform jazz chorus, he went on to publish his gorgeous collection of Buddhist meditations, *The Sutra Of The Golden Eternity*, when no one else would touch it. These days Baraka doesn't feel nearly so charitable.

"Kerouac was a jerk," he barks. "What can I tell you? Some of the things he did were interesting. On *The Road*, some of the improvisational techniques he developed — but in terms of his own consciousness he simply got worse and worse. It seemed to me he turned out to be a racist — he just totally degenerated. I went out to see Jack once, I took a train all the way out to Long Island where he was living with his mother. I don't know why — he had got to be very mono-conscious, drinking all the time, a less than interesting person and openly racist, as was his mother. I couldn't understand the mother thing — he was like a big drunken kid. He had some periods when he was trying to escape from all of that, but your social life shapes your mind and a lot of those guys, you know. I argued with Ginsberg over this for 25 years — he wanted peace, I wanted war. I wanted an end to imperialist war, but as far as peace for our society went, I never believed that — I thought these people needed to be killed. I didn't believe anybody was gonna be, like, *labeled* to death."

Baraka's guns-of-Harlem ghetto romanticism is probably partly explained by the fact that he grew up in a staunchly middle class family in Newark, New Jersey. Born in October 1934, Baraka later attended Columbia University, receiving an MA in German Literature. Afterwards he served time in the US Air Force, where conflicting sources claim he was either a gunner or an "aerial cinematographer." However, it was a chance encounter with Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* that blew open the doors, fully articulating the vague sense of alienation he constantly carried

around with him. He fired off a letter to Ginsberg, reputedly scribbled on a piece of toilet paper, requesting material for *Yugen's* debut issue. Yet the written word was a late-flowering passion — for the young LeRoi Jones it was the music of the streets that blew up an insane love breeze. "Oh yeah, music was my earliest passion," he proclaims. "Always music — the black community is always full of music. Used to be more full of music when I was a kid. People would play records through loudspeakers outside stores all day, and there were more street musicians — people just come up from the South with guitars, out there playing. Not trying to make no money, just there to tell everyone about their life."

There was always plenty of music in the Jones household — his grandparents dug the blues, his parents the swing of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton — and he has vivid memories of attending dancehalls out in Newark, going down there with a box of Ritz crackers, a chicken and a bottle of liquor, just digging the crazy music. "The words came later for me," he claims. "They came out of two places — the words of the blues, because there were people that used to just talk the blues, and the church, because they would always have spoken word over the music, telling you some old wild stuff. I played the drums, the trumpet, the piano, but I just know like Clint Eastwood said a man has to know his own limitations. It just wasn't my thing. I was impatient with that — it came out of me quicker than I could get it out of an instrument. God knows I tried — I took piano lessons, what twice? Three times? Poetry was just doing what I could do, to get on top of something rather than always sniffling at the edges. I could have been a bad musician without any doubt — bad in the accepted sense of the word."

You can still see it in Baraka when he's on stage, the way he pulls shapes, throws his hands in the air, bursts into scat-singing and ho-pairing solos — he still thinks, acts and reads like a musician. For Hugh Ragin, working with Baraka was a real eye-opening experience. "We were in the studio doing a piece with Baraka on it," he explains. "You know the poem 'When Miles Sold', where he talks about Miles Davis? Like how he held his body when he played, how he held his horn? When I was in the studio he was holding the mic like this and he looked like Miles Davis, I swear to you — he was trumpeting his words, you know what I mean? It's like we're two instruments up there — he's very musical, he has rhythm, notes, singing, speaking. Sometimes he'll hit a note, E natural, and just improvise around that. I said, 'Baraka, when you get up to that E you are just in tune with the world, man, everything comes in order!' He said, 'That's the main point, where you just let it go, let it flow — you become the whole environment.' Once I could see that Baraka related to E natural, I played that too and we were right there together. That is a higher consciousness. He asked me how he could practise that at home. I said, 'You can't!'"



Baraka begins his *Ragin' with Ragin'* like, "Well, certain notes and sounds do unlock certain people in a particular way." His nod: "People are tuned differently, people have different rhythms — your rhythm is something that you work at every day — what does your life consist of that helps form the rhythms of your life? I would think that it's only people who recite with music, who start to think in musical terms — if you're reading with a musician, you have to think like him to a certain extent. Music is shades of temperament and colour, yet unless the poet is very conscious the voice tends to be in a monotone. First of all, expressive speech is not a monotone! But the average Western post-1960s reader — because folk readers tend to be more animated and tonally diverse — tends to think that expression has to do with being intelligent. They're trying to sound intelligent and they think intelligence is very quiet, monotonous and whispered — that's the most boring sound in the world, right? If you played music like that nobody would want to listen to it. You have to give the words a quality that does not only rely on literal translation."

The night before our meeting, Baraka had played a storming show with Ragin's quartet at the festival. Caught up in "A Message From Sun Ra", which sees Ra reappear in the skies over Philadelphia. Some thought he was the Mother Ship but we knew he was just being hip, he was a blur of movement and song — leaping, leaping, leaping, singing through tenor solos of spit. "SUN RA Sun RA, SUN RA!" In addition, his eulogy for Miles Davis was genuinely moving as he recalled the extent of his teen fixation, bursting into scat choruses of "So What?" and matching Miles's trumpet solo from "Straight No Chaser" note for note. At points like that I enter the stream of consciousness. Baraka says, "I'm connected to it as a mechanism. You let your mind flow the way it wants to without formal structure, and that to me is the great thing about any improvisation — you just let your mind go where it wants to go."

Although Baraka had formulated his own essentials of spontaneous prose back in the 50s, it wasn't until the revolutionary period of the early to mid-60s that he began to realise the extent of the methodological crossover between jazz, blues and the spoken word. The epic word-spew of his "Black Dada Nihilismus", on The New York Art Quartet's self-titled ESP-Disk from 1964, is frighteningly prophetic, as Baraka sings of blackness unbound. He still remembers the period as an insanely accelerated time of progress, but now believes the seeds were planted a decade earlier. "Any time the social base is transforming, everything moves faster," he posits. "Lévin says that a revolutionary period is a time when a lot of things can be done in a short time. It seems that things that would normally take years and years happen in days and months because everything is stepped up. The revolutionary period for jazz comes from the late 50s — the most important bands of the period were the Miles Davis band with

Trane, and [the] Clifford Brown/Max Roach [groups]. But what happens is Brown and Roach got sidetracked and stopped, but it seems to me that that period of the music coming out of the Cool was incredibly important. I mean, bebop was a distinctly revolutionary period, but then it went through a kind of stabilising time when the commercial forces tried to domesticate it — which was cool. Miles contributed to that — then the reaction to that was hard bop and Miles got pulled off into that too. But the reaction was valuable because it made black musicians go off back to the church — you get the Horace Silver groups, Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers, the soul music. That's the precursor to the stuff that comes out of that. Trane, Rollins, etcetera. It comes from the fact that they had to go back and touch base first, back to Horace Silver and Art Blakey — that's when they even had a gospel nightclub on 40-something street in New York. That's what Albert Ayler was doing: he played a very broad, religious tone."

"By the end he was speaking in tongues!" Hugh Ragin bursts. "It actually visited Donald Ayler and his father in their house back in the spring of 1980. They told me that Donald started playing the saxophone first. Their father was a preacher and they used to play in the church. When Albert started on saxophone it was pretty clear who had the most talent and his dad had to go to Donald and say, 'You're not really catching on like Albert, why don't you try the trumpet?'"

Baraka roars with laughter. "You're not catching on like Albert," he giggles. "Nobody caught on like Albert! I remember this concert at the Lincoln Center where all the people were there — Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders — and after the interval it was Albert's turn to go onstage and he burst from the wings and ran on just screaming with his saxophone held high over his head, still in his mouth but letting out this howl, like 'AAAAARRGGHHH!' It sent chills through everybody. When you listen to Albert's records, they're not the whole Albert Ayler. Those are not records. Those are rumours, you dig? The real Albert sounded a lot scarier than that because that sound was a living sound. That was a wild sound. What's missing? The breath of life. You hear Trane on record and you know it's still Trane on those records but with Albert it's not him. He didn't conceive of himself as having any limits, he was trying to play everything. I've never heard nobody sound like Albert to this day. It's the sound of something that has got to be unleashed."

Both Donald and Albert Ayler marched in the triumphal parade that announced the arrival of Black Arts in Harlem in 1965. Along 125th Street, they were joined by Sun Ra's Arkestra dancing along the middle of the road in full space regalia, with drummer Milford Graves beating out the march. For the next three months Baraka's Black Arts experiment in cultural revolution was a glorious success. At the Black Arts



school, based in a renovated brownstone on West 130th Street, students were taught music, revolution, history and mystery, with Sun Ra running a special course on "The Blacker Arts", which included a degree in "Myth-Science". Artists toured the community on the backs of flatbed trucks, lighting up the streets with the sounds of outer and inner space. "Our aesthetic was to do art that was independent of American White Supremacy," Baraka reiterates. "To be truly independent of that force. Even today I tell students that they should not wait to be discovered by these forces. They have to publish themselves, print their own works, put their own theatre stuff out. But the problem is being accorded that kind of celebration until they get their own journals where they can have a self-conscious celebration of themselves, it's gonna be hard. Nobody likes to work in a vacuum and feel uncelebrated, but the only way you're gonna get something done is to do it — you're not gonna be helped by them, you gotta go on and just do it!"

New York's new jazz community was uniformly supportive, with the likes of Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders and Don Pullen travelling upstate for benefits, while Coltrane, trombonist Grachan Moncur and vibeanist Bobby Hutcherson all held fundraisers downtown. Even Sammy Davis Jr. travelled up for a benefit at 125th Street. In his self-published booklet, *The Black Arts Movement*, Baraka defined exactly what he meant by Black Art: "We wanted a Black Art that was identifiably Afro-American, as black as Bessie Smith or John Coltrane. That is, we wanted to express our lives and history. We wanted it to be a Mass Art. To boogie out of the classrooms and elite dens of iniquitous obliquity and speak and sing and scream among black people! We wanted an art that was revolutionary. We wanted a Malcolm art, a by-any-means-necessary poetry. A ballad or bullet verse. We wanted, ultimately, to create a poetry, a literature, a dance, a theatre, a painting that would help bring about revolution!"

However, it was all over by the autumn of 65, when the government funding bodies uncovered the revolutionary nature of the project and closed down the building. Baraka retreated back to Newark, New Jersey, where he founded the Spirit House, another performance space where he would base Jihad Records. Long unavailable, Baraka has begun to re-release the entire back catalogue on CD through Son Boy Records, starting with a performance of his black science creation-myth play, *A Black Mass*, complete with a live, improvised soundtrack by The Arkestra. To follow there is the release of his own *Black And Beautiful* project *Soul And Madness, the Sorry*

Travis Now album and most excitingly two unrealized Ayler sessions — one with Pharoah Sanders on a compilation called *Nights At Spirit House*; the other with revolutionary Cleveland trumpeter Norman Howard, who had previously turned up on Ayler's *Witches And Devils*. Son Boy also plan a reprint of four original issues of *The Crook*, a jazz-centric journal which Jihad published at the time.

Today, Baraka is philosophical about the closing down of the Black Arts. "You see, what we do as people is we have periods where we try to break out," he explains. "We have revolutionary periods, but the conservative forces simply form again like some kind of mould, like some kind of science fiction blob. If you're strong enough you might push it this way or that way so it's permanently reshaped. It's being reshaped now. Like the US election, the Democrats are against the wall but I hope they win. It's slightly reshape things, but it's still essentially under the cover of the blob. It sounds like it's a new thing — more daring, more trustworthy! But it's just the blob!"

Politically Baraka himself has moved on. Now a Marxist-Leninist, he long ago abandoned any Black Nationalist aspirations. "I'm a communist," he asserts. "So the whole national question is dissolved for me, though I still believe that white supremacy is part of imperialism. However, I don't believe anymore that it's some kind of wickedness. People rule a certain way for a certain period and that's the way they act but, I believe, especially in America, that there are people who know better and I struggle against that. It's like me. I don't love male chauvinism but I am one! I'm always doing some dumb shit like that — always saying, 'Hey, I'm sorry — doesn't mean I'm out to rule women, know what I'm saying?'"

"Ultimately, class is the only way to measure advantage and disadvantage in the world — there's nothing intrinsically good about being black, nothing good about being white. Nothing intrinsically evil about either one either. What I'm saying is we're all niggers — all the people that can see that, all the people that can feel that. All the slave masters are gonna die and the people who can see that they're niggers are the only ones that will survive. People who feel that they're being abused in the world are the ones that are going to fight. No matter who they are, what they look like, they're gonna fight. Like the Irish!" He looks up, gives me a wink. "You been fighting the blob longer than I have!" A *Black Mass* is out now on Son Boy.

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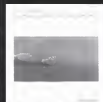


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desolation angels

Spoken for by **Sigur Rós**, **Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson** and the **Kuchen Motors** collective, the island's hardy children of nature are proving stubbornly resistant to the World Rock Corporation's attempts to tame them. Words: Rob Young. Photos: Eva Vermandel



As the aircraft barrels round to approach the runway at Keflavik airport, in whichever direction you look there is nothing to break the slow curve of the sea. Iceland — that last remnant of Transatlantic land bridge, once the staging post for Viking forays towards the Vinland that is now America — lies marooned on its own line of longitude, tucked under the Arctic Circle athwart the major faultline that split the Atlantic ocean in half. Before the age of international travel, Iceland was truly an outpost, a time capsule whose frozen tundras preserved a parallel mix of pagan religion and Dark Ages Christianity. In the dawning 21st century, Iceland still may not be a burgeoning world power — with a total population of only a quarter of a million, and a practically uninhabitable interior, how could it be? — but the city of Reykjavik is no quaint settlement. On the drive from airport to town, a vast, transparent dome studded with pinpoints of lightbulbs forms the roof of the hot water power plant that motors much of the city. Meanwhile the tallest structure on the horizon is the cathedral, a concrete oddity pitched somewhere between communist shopping mall, Scandinavian stave-church and Angkor Wat.

Under the shadow of such curious architecture, a surprising amount of sound is being generated from the settlements that dot the river, silent landscape. This is not news: the likes of Sugarcubes and Björk have illuminated the pop firmament far in advance of the current wave. But every so often, for all sorts of fortuitous reasons, one particular location somewhere on the planet seems to harness its energies around an intense group of individuals to produce a waterspout that is visible from afar. Amid the general muck of homogenised and syndicated culture the world over, such small flumes are what remind you that things don't have to be the way the big forces want you to believe it is.

At the forefront of this surge, right now, are a young four piece rock group with a baby's name. Sigur Ros's handle was practically thrust on them, when the sister of singer Jóns Birgisson gave birth to a daughter with that name. Although they've been plugging away in their home country for the past seven years, they suddenly started appearing all over the Western press in summer 2000, largely thanks to a series of involving live performances at European festivals, a support slot on tour with the mighty Godspeed You! Black Emperor!, and, finally, the hard hitting, overwhelming beauty of their Fat Cat album *Ágætis byrjun* (A Good Start). Their music has the kind of beauty that could almost drive you to the brink of madness. Although there's nothing especially original in their adoption of conventional instruments, it proves you don't have to necessarily involve the most compacted technologies to encode a sense of a momentarily impending future. Their stack in trade is guitars, violin bows, sticks and slens, keyboards built of wood, the oscillating air of revolving speaker cabinets, the inefficient heat of transistor valves rather than the cold solder of a silicon circuit board. The noise they make is a far cry from the clipped, shaved and trimmed clicks of today's stark electronics. Indeed, as Jóns points out, "Sometimes I think electricians need to learn guitar, to write good melodies, and songs." For Sigur Ros — against the grain of the times — music's primary quality is what's in the box, not what the box looks like.

I think we were outside of everything [when we started], and I think we've always been a bit outside of everything," says Georg Holm, bass player and most laconious of the four — which isn't saying much. "We never really played that often, not many gigs — maybe four a year at most. Then, I don't know, it just evolved into now playing 70 or 80 gigs a year." The quartet — as well as Georg, there's



Child of nature: Wilson, 37, is a hunter.

guitarist/vocalist Jon Por (Jónsi) Björgsson, keyboardist/guitarist Kjartan (Kjarni) Sveinsson, and drummer Óni Páll Dýrason — may not 'give' the kinds of things their chosen sphere of work expects of them, by way of confessional interviews or unbridled photo shoots, but in their own quiet way they do attempt to illustrate something of themselves by direct experience. In the course of a couple of days spent in their presence, you might find yourself driven out on a dusty trail through the mountains and surrounded by a herd of wild horses that poke their heads into a car window. Or you might find yourself toasting coins into volcanic ponds, with water so clear you can watch the silver trout fishlike during its 30-second descent. You could end up with them below the looming black trench of the island's most sacred gathering spot, a vast crack in the surface of the landscape that marks where the Atlantic shelf sundered, or digging newly baked bread out of lakeside sand warmed by natural hot springs, or subjecting your body to the stifling heat of those selfsame springs in an outdoor natural sauna, listening to the faint tinkling and cracking of ice floes drifting across the water. Such magical sensations nourish this heartfelt music, this connection with the land that has made its peoples bond so strongly with it.

"Everybody comes back," says Kristín Björk Kristjánsdóttir, director of Kitchen Motors, an undefinable entity which releases records, organises intriguing avant-garde music events, and generally acts as a focal point for Iceland's disparate musical forces, from electroacoustic composition to performance art, theatre, punk poetry and all points in between. "It's true. Everybody who at some time in their lives moves away from Iceland, they always come back," she laughs. "And even people who visit Iceland, they always come back."

A sudden influx of angels. Godspeed! spin-off A Silver Mount Zion hymn the spirit of their departed dog Wanda on their CD *He Has Left Us Alone But Shouts Of Light Sometimes Grace The Corner Of Our Rooms*. A vast William Blake exhibition at London's Tate Britain, and attendant talks by author Peter Ackroyd, can't help but foreground the visionary engraver's burning hallucinations of some kind of holy spirit; Patti Smith flies into London to deliver a tribute, assembled on a wing and a prayer, to Blake's genius, singing his verses just metres away from the font where the child Blake was baptised. The BBC screens a documentary on the rather mawkish accumulation of angel sightings and literature that has come to share bookshop shelfspace with celestial prophecies, astrological charts and Feng Shui manuals in recent years. And in Iceland, there's *Angels Of The Universe (Englar Alheimans)*, a film by the nation's premier film maker Friðrik Thór Friðriksson, which has dominated the nation's cinematic mind in the past year and will be winging its way to arthouse theatres in Europe during 2001. Based on real events, the film charts one individual's crisis as creative mania splits into a schizophrenic hell that sunders him from his family, eventually driving him off the top of a housing block and into aether. The real-life protagonist was a friend of both Friðriksson and the composer of the film's soundtrack, former Psychic TV member Hilmir Óni Hilmirsson, who since parting company with Genesis P-Orridge in 1986 has made a career in soundtracks back in his native land. His music for Friðriksson's film *Children Of Nature* was released on Touch in 1996, and his soundtrack for the new movie is on Sigur Rós's own label Kukk Records. The group themselves contribute two pump-rock tracks that first appeared on an EP on Fat Cat in 2000. Both tracks are covers: "Blum Blum Bambalo" derives from a local lullaby, while "Danarfrégnir Óg Járðarfarnir" is the music that soundtracks national radio announcements of deaths and funerals.

"It's a song that we have been hearing since we were this big," says Kjarni. The

composer said: "I was trying to get a big Icelandic soundscape out of this small tune! It is played on some sort of organ or synth. They made a new version on the radio played with bassoons."

"It's a very Icelandic song," says Georg. "But we wanted it to be ROCK!" "It's very melancholic and depressing," adds Jónsi. Do they feel the presence of mortality in this landscape? "Everywhere," laughs Georg. "In the landscape, there is not much life, so when you are standing in the middle of it, you think, OK, I am the only thing that's living here."

"[In Iceland] everybody reads obituaries," comments Hilmir Óni Hilmirsson. "And in a way it makes everybody's life pretty worthwhile. In other places you have to be someone, whereas in Iceland you can be someone's great grandmother who hasn't really accomplished anything. But it's also this urge to tell stories, to give them life in death, basically. To give everybody some sort of dignity — I think that's really important."

That word 'englar' crops up again in the Sigur Rós masterwork, "Svein-G-Englar". If there's one song people will remember Sigur Rós by, it's this one: a slow mournful swoon of a thing, majestic without haughtiness. With enormous voices shadowing the brushing beats like AR Kane's "Baby Milk Snatcher", it also recalls Felix's "Primitive Painters", Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden*, my Bloody Valentine, the entropic clonings of Canadians Godspeed.

"I don't think the atmosphere around our band is the same," avers Georg. "I understand why people tend to categorise our music with their music, but I don't think we have much in common with them. It was very difficult touring with them. It was our first proper tour. Now we can look back — we have done several tours — but the Godspeed tour was really difficult. We had to have five minute soundchecks because they took three hours."

"It was really good, though," adds Jónsi, "we learnt a lot from it. They are a very independent group. They do it all themselves and we learnt a lot from that. And really nice people, it was really fun." Independence is the key perhaps to the link between these two groups from neutral countries, who have found themselves made reluctant bards of the swelling movement of protest against the dehumanising powers of capital. At this moment, the elegy sounds more powerful than the protest. "They are much more serious people than we are," explains Jónsi. "There are very few bands in the alternative rock scene that have this kind of aura over the band. When they played it was a really magical moment — there's a power when they play." It's true that the mood around Sigur Rós is very different to the stalled democracy of Godspeed, who emanate the feeling that everything's fucked, the battle is lost but you have to fight it anyway. Sigur Rós have retained a hope that what they do might have the power to change things. "We play pop, future pop — we hope that pop in the future is going to be like this." Last year, they ended up as support for the corporate fate of non-corporate rock, Radiohead, whose gestures at deconstructing their own stardom — unbranded tours, toying with mass media interview protocol, spurning off influences from underground Techno — did indeed give some cause for hope that there is room for unconvention in stadium-size rock last year. Sigur Rós's success allowed some income after seven years of hobbyism — "enough to pay the rent and buy some food — it's our dream come true to get paid," says Jónsi. They are likewise determined to stick with Fat Cat — Kjarni maintains, "It gives us a lot of artistic freedom and control, that's really important."

Georg? "I think the difference between an independent and a major label is that on





the independent, the people that run the label become your friends. They don't ask you to do anything except as a favour. If you're on a major, it becomes a kind of fifth member. And maybe you come to hate that fifth member, and that's going to run everything."

Iceland, and Reykjavik in particular, harbours a music scene most European countries would kill for. A mutually supportive network of shop chairs, each run independently — often by musicians themselves — who between them take care of distribution for all the labels that come in from the rest of the world, acting as clearing warehouses for major and independent labels, from EMI to Kranky. It also has its own music magazines and media, plus apparently countless record labels putting out unconventional sounds. As Georg puts it: "Everybody in Iceland enjoys music and looks around for new bands. I think people, when the band was beginning, at that time they didn't want to listen to Icelandic bands, but it's changing. People are listening more to Icelandic music. But people of course listen to what they hear on the radio — they go to the music store and buy from the charts."

"Sometimes you get these independent radio stations for a couple of months," says Kjarn, "then somebody buys them and they sell ads and get really corporate."

"Especially American companies that buy up Icelandic radio stations," Georg adds. "Then they have a playlist, and it's only American rock. Limp Bizkit, or Creed or something. That's the band that I hate the most."

But descend to the next circle and you'll find a raft of adventurous music and sound artists working mostly in collaborative ventures. Last October, the Kitchen Motors collective formed part of the first International Electronic and Computer Music Festival, held at the straightfaced Kópavogur Opera House in the capital. An international cast of guests included Paul Lansky, Trevor Wishart, Clarence Barlow, modular synth pioneer Don Buchla, Peter Apfelbaum, Biosphere and Bernhard Gurrer. Iceland's crop were out in force too: quirky glitch improvisers Stillingsteypa, a trio now living in various parts of Europe, returned to perform along with local musicians Hilmar Jónsson, Skuli Svansson, Apparát Órgan Quæst (a Stereolab/ADD N To IX) influenced outfit, Biogen, Curver, Tinnis and plenty more. Hilmar Órn Hilmarsson, who contributed a DJ set which juxtaposed a jumble of contemporary musics with traditional music from the Faroe Islands to make a point about the historical colonisation and repression of indigenous inhabitants of those islands, was impressed by the meeting of worlds at the event.

Kristín Björk Kristjánssdóttir and Johan Jóhannsson of Kitchen Motors curated "the noisier, non-academic things" for them. It was the culmination of a series begun several years ago, and documented on a double CD in a yellow plastic wallet entitled *Narr-Nibbles: Improvised Music Experiments In Reykjavík*. Nothing if not ambitious, Kitchen Motors presents largescale works which they call *Helvets Symphonies*. The first featured members of Sagar Ros and the electronic/laptop outfit Múm, who put out a CD *Yesterday Was Dramatic, Today Is OK* on Tugboat during 2000. Kitchen Motors

describe themselves as "a record label, a think tank, an art organisation promoting concerts, art shows, performance art, operas, producing films, books and radio shows based on the ideals of experimentation and collaboration and the search for new art forms". During 2000, the collective organised a monthly series of multi-arts shows called *MotorLab*, each one culminating in a performance of *Telefona*, a piece for GSM phones and laptop. Inspired explicitly by Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*, the premise is that audience members call in to a vocal number displayed on a screen during the performance. *Telefona* collects these messages, and blends them into Ambient sound captured live in the room, with the space's natural acoustics slowly amplifying and pushing the piece to a crescendo. The software used to effect this transformation was developed by The Hafler Trio's Andrew MacKenzie, yet another Iceland resident.

"We had some beautiful evenings of brainstorming," recalls Kristín, "with a pen and paper in hand and basically fantasised about which people we would like to see collaborating and doing what. And so the next thing we did was, Why the hell shouldn't we just call people up and see if they're up for doing it? And we did, and everybody was. I can't recall a single person that said, Hell no. Obviously some of the collaboration didn't work out, and the experiment failed but was still interesting. But some of the people that got together then are still working together."

"We like executing extreme ideas that we get, and for example putting 20 tuba players in one room is something we would like to do, and will actually do. We have a series of *Helvets Symphonies* we call them, there's been three so far. The first was a guitar symphony, Glenn Branca style, 13 guitar players, the second was a percussion symphony, and the third one is an organ symphony, we did in Helsinki this year with Finnish Caspian organ players."

MotorLab has already been chugging outside of Iceland — they transplanted it to Paris's *Batolar* venue in summer as part of a season of Scandinavian underground sound running there, in 2001 they hope to tour through Finland, Estonia and Russia. Are they deliberately cleaving to routes less well travelled?

"I think there will always be tension between those two worlds," states Kristín, "and I think it's healthy. But it doesn't mean that even though the marginal musicians are in minority, it shouldn't make them less strong — it should make them even more strong. And what we've been experimenting with this year is putting very challenging music into a big theatre or club where people who usually listen to mass pop music go. For example we debuted our *Telefona* in the biggest shopping mall in Iceland, with Andrew MacKenzie on the controls, feedbacking away for half an hour. And the shop owners were going mad! That's what I find interesting. I like to see things shake a bit. I don't think it's enough to make music in your own little corner. If it's enough for you, but I think it's very important to at least offer interested ears the chance, give them the benefit of the doubt."

"I'm still very impressed at the wind that's been blowing under our wings. The motor of it all is of course all these people that are so open to our ideas and go along with them."





Krísta Björk Kjartansson
of Kítillinn Plötur



Sigur Ros in Reykjavik. Left to right:
Orri, Georg, Kjart, Jóni

consciously, but automatically."

On one night, Sigur Ros perform two numbers as a small fraction of a tribute concert for one of Icelandic Radio's longest serving disc jockeys. The teasingly short set consists of instrumentals performed in their typical style — layers of floating resonance generated from bowed electric guitar, electronically enhanced buzz from an E-bow, and plodding brush drums, the resonances of traditional instruments such as fiddle and hurdy-gurdy electrified and converted to an alternating current of sparking drone. For this occasion, the vocals are delivered by local poet/folklorist Steindór Andersen. Amid the bluesy revived groups from the past 20 years or so who make up this patchy evening's entertainment, SR's all too brief appearance reveals the "nouveau folk" aspect of their approach.

"It's a question of belief systems," Himarsson states. "Icelanders converted nominally to Christianity 1,000 years ago, but they never really did it. So we've had the old gods, they live through the folklore, they lived through these different customs, and you find out that the majority of the population believes in elves and power spirits and stuff like that. So in a way, the invisible world is always with us. We believe in it, I think magic and ritual works only if you believe in it."

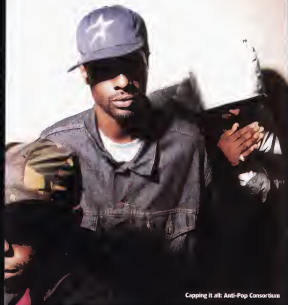
Nothing to break the slow curve of the sea. The waters are rising, the earth is cracking open, augurs of catastrophe are on the wing. "Sigur Ros and I," says Himarsson, "we are taking this old Icelandic poem, part of the *Æddo* corpus in the old Icelandic mythology until the mid-19th century. There was a Norwegian scholar who thought it was spurious, and so it was thrown out of the corpus, but now it's been reinstated. We want to take that poem and do a big performance out of it, because it's really millennial type majesty — the world is slowly freezing over, and the gods are departing away and not caring if mankind, or all the worlds are about to be destroyed. It's this impending doom running through the whole thing. So we would like to do that and produce some 'Viking music' and see where that takes us. It's important for me, becoming old and set in my ways, to step outside of that from time to time. And Sigur Ros also thrive on challenges and doing new things. They are not afraid of experiments. We have been talking about this for close to a year. And now it seems we have time." *The Angels Of The Universe* (Englur Alheimis) soundtrack, by Himar Om Himarsson and Sigur Ros, is available now on Krunk Agnets Byrjun is out on Fat Cat. Website: www.sigur-ros.com

The angels have retreated to the wilderness, holed up in land that denser populations call "waste." Here is in fact wastes opposite — fulsome space that is a zone for visions. Inspiration can easily strike quick in such a space — peopled with mounds concealing ancient dead. From the air, jetblack roads cradle to a full stop in black pools.

Sigur Ros make hymns from a waste. Life in what the wider world deems an outpost allows the space and time to be inspired. Immersion in a whiteout zone leads to the madness depicted in *Angels Of The Universe*. "Culture has been an identity for us," explains Himarsson. "We have absolutely no buildings we have nothing except stones — that's what kept us going. Sometimes in a really pathetic way, they are stuck on the glorious past that was Iceland but never was. And of course, a lot of the original art and customs were stamped out by the Danish authorities. So we've lost most of our folk music, our traditional dances, because they were seen as obscene, so they were outlawed in the 18th century. We haven't got a heritage, but we kept the stories. It's very similar to Ireland, it's very refreshing to come to Ireland, and just go into the same atmosphere they don't have football stars, they have Yeats and poets."

"In a way I'm a big Platonist. I believe there's this great idea preserved up there somewhere, and the idea changes with the spirit of the times but remains essentially the same. Ritualistic music." Sigur Ros probably have the same character as Bach, some of our drum playing ancestors — I think it's the same basic idea."

"I think it differs a lot between musicians," says Krónin, "how well connected they are with their roots. Some people let the roots grow from the earth into their body and out into their music, and will be open for that. Open for the volcano that everybody is born with inside. But a lot of people, of course, are looking further than that, disregarding what is closest, ignoring their heritage, maybe not so



Copping it all: Anti-Pop Consortium

REWIND 2000

Welcome to 2001's first space odyssey: a time trip through the last 12 months in new music, including our **50 Records Of The Year** plus a host of specialist end of year charts, as voted for by *The Wire*'s team of writers and critics. Meanwhile, our contributors offer up their personal pros and cons of 2000, and some of the year's key players send back despatches from music's frontline

50 Records Of The Year

- Anti-Pop Consortium** *Tragic Epilogue* (75 Ark)
- Kid606** *Down With The Sore* (Ipecac)
- Radishhead** *Kid A* (Capitol)
- The Fall** *The Unutterable* (Eagle)
- Otomo Yoshihide** *Cethode* (Tzadik)
- Outkast** *Stankonia* (Arista)
- Ghostface Killah** *Supreme Clientele* (Epic)
- Ryoji Ikeda** *Matrx* (Touch)
- Derek Bailey** *String Theory* (Parasol)
- Joe Harriott** *Genius* (Jazz Academy)
- Kid Koala** *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome* (Ninja Tune)
- Cell Music** *To Play In The Dark Vol 2* (Chalice)
- Laamo** *Vocalicity* (Force Inc)
- Primal Scream** *Extremebor* (Creation)
- Current 93** *Sleep Has His House* (Dunro)
- Fushluzha** *I Saw It That Which Before I Could Only Sense* (Parasol)
- Parker/Guy/Lytton & Marilyn Crispell** *After Appleby* (Leo)
- Philip Jack** *Vinyl Coda* (Hill Intermedium)
- Pole** *Pole 3* (Kitt SM)
- Cale/Conrad/HadLise/Young/Zazzeala** *Inside The Dream Syndicate Vol 1: Day Of Niagara* (1965) (Table Of The Elements)
- Chicago Underground Duo** *Synesthesia* (Thrill Jockey)
- John Butcher & Phil Durrant** *Requests & Antsongs* (Erstwhile)
- Infesticons** *Gun Hill Road* (Big Dada)
- Fomesa/O'Tourke/Rehberg** *The Magic Sound Of Fennoborg* (Hegol)
- Merabow** *Herzob* (Extreme Special Editions)
- The Necks** *Hanging Gardens* (Fish Of Milk)
- Einsteinsende Neubauten** *Silence Is Sexy* (Hute)
- Terry Riley** *The Gift* (Organ Of Corti)
- Various** *Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music Vol 4* (Revenant)
- Gordon Plumea** *Studio Retrospective* (Lovely Music)
- New York Art Quartet** *35th Reunion* (DWW)
- D'Angelo** *Voodoo* (Virgin)
- Isolée** *Rest* (Playhouse)
- Grateful Dead** *Dick's Picks Vol 16* (Grateful Dead Records)
- Current 93** *Faust* (Dunro)
- Evan Parker & Keith Rowe** *Dark Rags* (Potstick)
- Kim Gordon/Kue Mori/DJ Olive** *Kim Gordon/Kue Mori/DJ Olive* (SVR)
- Dean Roberts** *And The Black Moths Play The Grand Cinema* (Ritornell)
- Derek Bailey/Jamaaladeen Tacuma/Calvin Weston** *Miracle* (Tzadik)
- Two Dollar Guitar** *Weak Beats And Lame Ass Rhymes* (Smells Like)
- Cat Power** *The Covers Record* (Matador)
- Flanger** *Midnight Sound* (NTone)
- Wu-Tang Clan** *The W* (Lous)
- C-Schultz & Hapsch** *C-Schultz & Hapsch* (Song)
- Jah Wobble** *Molam Dub* (3D Hertz)
- Angus MacLise** *Brain Damage* (In Oklahoma City (Quakebasket))
- Charlemagne Palestine** *Karenina* (Dunro)
- Sonic Youth** *NYC Ghosts & Flowers* (Geffen)
- Hilford Graves** *Stones* (Tzadik)
- John Fahey** *Horns* (LJ/House)

Avant Rock & Out Pop

John Fahey *Honk* (Lo/House)
Sonic Youth *NYC Ghosts & Flowers* (Geffen)
Goodspeed You Black Emperor! *Levez Vos Skinny Fists...* (Constellation)
The Dead C *The Dead C* (Language)
The Fall *The Unutterable* (Eagle Rock)
Radiohead *Kid A* (Capitol)
High On Fire *The Art Of Self Defense* (Man's Ruin)
Lou Reed *Ecstasy* (Reprise)
Fushitsusha *I Saw It That Which Before I Could Only Sense* (Paratactile)
Hiss *From Zero* (Paratactile)
Sigur Rós *Ágætis byrjun* (Fat Cat)
Björk *Selma* (One Little Indian)
Hooshio *Choyo Hoashio* (Tzadik)
Mahar Shalish Hesh Baz *From A Summer To Another Summer...* (Geographic)
The Sea And Cake *Out* (Thrill Jockey)
Boredoms *Visión, Creation, Newsum* (WEA Japan)
Electric Wizard *Dopethrone* (Rise Above)
Royal Trux *Pound For Pound* (Domino)
Acid Mothers Temple *Troubadours From Another Heavenly World* (PSF)
Primal Scream *Extremities* (Creation)

Global

Jah Wobble *Moslem Dub* (30 Hertz)
Nils Lofgren *Straum* (Rune Grammofon)
Various *Ndaba, Sena Tonga, Shona: Other Musics From Zimbabwe* (Sharp Wood)
Mohammed Reza Shajarian & Kayhan Kalhor *Night Silence Desert* (Traditional Crossroads)
Hariprasad Chaurasia & Shiv Kumar Sharma *Navras* (Navras)
Muskrat Fatch Ali Khan *Dust To Gold* (Real World)
Various *Sacred Music Of The Moroccan Jews* (Ocora)
Ustad Sultan Khan *The Legend Continues* (Navras)
Ahalihi De Gourara *Sacred Songs From The Sahara* (Institut Du Monde Arabe)
Reben Gonzalez *Chanchullo* (World Circuit)
Boubacar Traore *Macré* (Indigo/Label Bleu)
Larry Coryell & Hariprasad Chaurasia *Musik Without Boundaries* (Navras)
Zia Mohiuddin Dagar *Raga Yama/Raga Shudda Tod* (Nimbus)
Cheikha Remitti *The Source Of The Rain* (Institut Du Monde Arabe)
Various *Moroccan Sufis & Berbers Dances & Trances* (World Arbuter)
The Wagogo *Tanzania: Wagogo Songs* (Ocora)
Tabla Beat Science *Tala Matrix* (Asym/Palm Pictures)
Susan Deyhim *Turbulent* (Eyestorm)
Various *Morocco Jitla* (Confraternity) (Ocora)
DJ Cheb *Sabbah* *Hisham* *Shin Durga* *Remixed* (Narcon)

Electronica

Susumu Yokota *Sakura* (Leaf)
holie *Rest* (Playhouse)
Kid660 *Down With The Scene* (Ipecac)
Pole *Pole 3* (Kitt SM)
Flanger *Midnight Sound* (NTone)
Add N To (X) *Add Insult To Injury* (Mute)
Biosphere *Cirque* (Touch)
Microstoria *Model 3, Step 2* (Zomba)
Ultra-red *Structural Adjustments* (Mile Plateau)
Dettinger *Oasis* (Kompakt)
Thomas Brinkmann *Soul Center Vol 2* (WVB Enterprises)
Vladislav Delay *Mutita* (Chain Reaction)
Blechnum *From Blechnum* *The Messy Jesse Festa* (Deluxe)
C-Schütz & Hajich *C-Schütz & Hajich* (Sonig)
Luomo *Vocality* (Force Tracks)
Alva Noto *Prototypes* (Mile Plateau)
Ustad Vappa Murali *Live* (Force Inc)
Vert *The Koin Concert* (Sonig)
Arovane *Acid Scrap* (Din)
Dr Rockit *Indoor Fireworks* (Ufelleke)

Improvisation

Derek Bailey *String Theory* (Paratactile)
Keith Rowe *Harsh, Guitar Solos* (Grob)
Evan Parker & Keith Rowe *Dark Rags* (Potstick)
Derek Bailey & Suzie Ibarra *Daedalus* (Incus)
Bill Dixon & Tony Oxley *Papyrus Vol 1* (Soul Note)
Derek Bailey/Jamaladeen Tacuma/Calvin Weston *Makale* (Tzadik)
Thomas Lehn & Gerry Hemingway *Tom & Gerry* (Brilliant)
Parker/Guy/Lynton and Marilyn Crispell *After Appleby* (Leo)
Masayoshi Urabe *Solo* (PSF)
Joseph Suhy *Smile* (Grob)
London Improvisers Orchestra *Proceedings* (Emanem)
Mo'el Akchoti *Rien* (Writer & Writer)
Mimeo *Electric Choir And Table* (Grob)
Konk Pak Big Deep (Grob)
Gary Smith & Joe Gallivan *Gary Smith & Joe Gallivan* (Paratactile)
Sankho Hamchik/Sheffey Hirsch/Catherine Bott *Temenos Soundtrack* (Leo)
Peter Angel (Jdici)

Guillermo Gregorio *Degrees Of Iconicity* (Hat [Now] Art)
John Butcher & Phil Durrant *Requests And Antisongs* (Ensemble)
Shoji Hano & Keiji Hano *The Strange Face* (Ultra Hard Gel)

forgot her headphones on stage. Jeans Team, Puppet Masters, Jurgen Soder for being so patient with us, opening our Web shop, Jill Mingo

John Balance (Coll)

Pro. Barcelona and Sonar, meeting Stockhausen and making him honorary member of COIL. The Fall — *The Unutterable*, *Freitag Aus Licht* — Stockhausen. Getting a 2nd Form modular synthesizer, getting rid of all my CDs and records, Cuk Effects plug-ins for Ableton. After Effects, League Of Gentlemen, Angkor Wat. Khymer cheese with red ants. Matmos, Fung Perfect! (www.fung.com). Eminem, Nash Point, Wales, lucid dreaming, Adrenal, Musick, friends recovering. Cons London, Shariene Spiteri, the music business in general (Constant Shallowness Leads To Evil), lavish magazines and the brainless waste that is the Sunday newspapers, the rise and rise of the Über-Babe (Madonna, Britney, Kyle, Sheena Easton!), all becoming one awful soundlike amorphous Teen product, trying to keep up with my dream diary, Alcohol, Music, friends getting ill and nearly dying.

Arnold Dreyblatt

With the enormous changes in music making and music hearing that have taken place over the last years, I wouldn't want to reduce this last year (or years) to a particular exemplary artist, recording or performance. If we take the old dictum that "Schoenberg liberated the notes from tonality, so that Cage could liberate the sound from the notes", we see

Pro. Had the sonic ontologies (Merzbow, Lopez, Fennest, et al), sound art explosion (Sonic Boom at the Hayward, Volume at PS1), Fazioli & Weiss and Sana Vasuka at MASS MoCA. David Grubbs's Pompidou installation. Ohm, Vintage Vorts and the archaeology of electronica, back in print. Cardew & The Scratch Orchestra's *The Great Learning*. Miles Davis's glorious *Get Up With It*, Coltrane's *Ascension*, Immanuel Nye's new *Inner Space Cabinet*. Freeman, Nauster and the deconstruction of music and commerce, the baffling spectacle of American politics. Tristan and Uwe — two babies in the house, headphones.

Cons. George Dubryn Bush, the internetized Internet not getting around much anymore

CHRISTOPH COX

Pro. Tokyo in January (as always). Prague in March: finally getting on the housing ladder. Fathy at Hoes. Fuchushe with Charles Hayward at the Garage. Acid Mothers Temple upstairs, KK Holo at the Brunswick in Belfast. Tosses and Melior in print. Afterlife and the usual round of corporate pleasures.

Cons. Finally getting on the housing ladder, boredom and academic rut-digging, lawyers, estate agents, anything with a big beam "respect", too many doors too close to home (Jack Tusau). Lucky the cat, the readily approaching prospect of finally having to find a job, time, people

ALAN CUMPHINGS

Pro. Music with two-step takes control. Humint! So Solid Crew, Trustbusters. B15 Project or putting the UK charts on lockdown. The militant beauty of Arovane, Hermann &

now the democratisation of digital sound tools finally liberating the means and content of distribution and composition on a mass scale. There are those who feel threatened by these changes, but having begun in the relatively small and isolated 'downtown' New York New Music community in the 70s, I know well the difficulty in creating and maintaining an independent voice against enormous odds. Many interesting and talented composers and musicians from that world are no longer with us.

Over the last year or two, I've been increasingly amazed at what passes for acceptability as being worth listening to. One only has to remember the extreme separation of high and low brow, electronic, rock, pop, classical, ethnographic categories all pervasive until just some years ago, to wonder that a magazine such as *The Wire* can report on Indian classical music, Zambian pop, historical and 'club' electronic music, a noise band, a long forgotten American minimalist composer, a jazz or improvising ensemble and so on — all within adjacent pages without insulting or turning off prospective paying readers. So, at the turn of the century, we seem to be listening with more open ears, we can choose to make sound with noise, new and traditional musical instruments, bits of old recordings, and electronic sounds, we can share it all on the Internet, and we can occasionally meet at concerts. There are certainly dangers and pitfalls in all of this euphoria, but in applying the 'long view' backwards and forwards, it doesn't 'sound' all that bad to me.



Simon H. Fell

Simon H. Fell

Depending whose calendar you believe, we're approaching either the end of the first year of the 21st century, or leaving the last year of the 20th. Either way, the shock of the resultant cultural redefinitions has been my main con of the year. As someone whose life thus far has revolved around the (up to now) synonymous terms 'contemporary music' and '20th century music', the breaking of this link is proving particularly hard. Especially since contemporary music (and I'm using this term in its specific, contemporary classical sense) now seems to consist of undemanding pop. Organisations set up to promote contemporary

music are now happy to give us [bad] rock music, [bad] World Music, [bad] dance music, anything except what these organisations might do well, the stimulating, challenging, confrontational intellectual music which has been their whole raison d'être until now. I've no problem with good rock music, good World Music, good dance music, but you won't find it on these programmes and tours!

Cons: 21st century means: Preferring provocative, challenging, difficult, abrasive works that might stimulate mental engagement to undemanding pop now seems to make me a 20th century throwback, even reactionary. It's OK for promoters and performers to replace post-war classical music with [bad] rock music, [bad] World Music, [bad] dance music, because 'of course nobody liked the other stuff anyway'. BBC Radio 3's Fiona Tallington telling me that these [European] percussionists playing standardised cod-African drumming and passing it off as someone's composition is what makes 'today's music' so exciting, 'so accessible'. It's a life's work being turned topsy-turvy.

Burnt Friedman

The ambiguity of the Brave New World 20 years ago I was confident and still two years ago I was hoping the magical date 2000 would challenge more common people to embrace futurism as they were told in science fiction movie design of the 70s, and also the chances would open up towards rather exotic music. Instead, more people avoid surprises or discover records dated before the 80s when strong ➤

Klene, Wehner, Garland, Ikon, Phonem, Laik Puna, etc. from the City Centre Offices. Most Music and Live Nigra also. Fresh from the UK, the bewitching Sybarite, the intriguing Simian the terse, nervous Playground, Leicester's entrancing, ramshackle Invisible Sals. Better late than never: discovering Daik's awesome Negro Negro Negro mini-EP. Show-wise: Chromatic Orchestra at Ronnie Scott's — thrilling. Bookwise: fare-ticon — Michel Fabre's mesmerising under *The Skin*. Five theory: Buckminster Fuller's *Your Private Sky*. Event-wise: Woody Vasulka at ODEI Mediamatic's great *Emulation*. Semipresent in Amsterdam: Lecturing on Archigram at the Tate Modern. Arsene, Field Of Forces at the MCA, Barcelona. Meeting Bruce Mau in London. Meeting Irm Schindl in Berlin. Meeting Jeff Koons for a hot second at Apolopole. Hanging out with Marlene Dumas in Amsterdam. The Decent Q'Woman. Elaine Morgan's Aquatic Ape hypothesis confirmed. Receiving Best Journal Award at Music Und Machine in Berlin. Cons: Missing too many shows. Overworked and overstressed. Long distance breakup trauma. Not getting to DJ enough. Watching Bush becoming President in grinding slow motion.

KODWO ESHIM

Pros: Two great film music experiences still come late. Yalchi's improvised soundtrack for Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* in a cramped Home Hospital, London and a rare screening of Michel Lagrand and Jacques Demey's kitsch/disillusioned musical of everyday life *The Umbrellas Of Cherbourg* at Dakota's. Rob Evan Parker, Barry Guy and Louis Moholo and Tim Barnes & Big Satin both at the Vortex, and Majura's return concert at the South Bank leaves its own weird mark.

Cons: Having my hi-fi stolen twice in a year. London's Compendium bookshop closing, not having the time or money or extra pairs of ears to catch the best sounds.

HATT FYFICHE

Pros: Theatre: *Another American*, *Asking And Telling* by Matt, *The Red Thing* by Tom Steppard, *The Synapse* by Pamiela Green, *Law music*, *Mike Ladd* and *The Denver Theatre Group* at Joe's Pub, *Fain High Fidelity*, *The Fair And The Furry*, *The Ganser*, *Survivor* (especially Colleen). The Mies: *Wing Print* (not all new), *McSweeney's*, *usinkers* (not, *Do the Windows*), *Q&A* by Julie Hecht, *Running In The Family* by Chris Ondaatje, *Jimmy Conson*, *Snowbird*, *Kid On Earth* by Chris Wale. Web: Elan Gonzalez/Budapest parody. Neptun: *McSweeney's*, *Edy's Whole Fruit Sorbet*, *S&K* say milk, *Star and Buweli* on Hot 97, *Pinky Bloody Valentine*, *The Beatles* rental cars with good stereos, *Terry Gross* on NPR. Cons: That goddamn butterfly ballot.

SASHA FRERE-JONES

Pros: Einstürzende Neubauten's 20th birthday concert on All Food's Day: an absolute privilege. Nick Cave's Secret *Life Of The Love Song* (King) for heart-stopping version of 'Sad Waters'. The Dancin David on ice: interactive avant garde ice-skating, truly joyful, but oh the bruises. *Watershed 2000*: Being bailed in Greek thermal baths, tracking rembetika stations on a tiny car radio.

Cons: Millennium brouhaha. Bad stuff in Austria (but see above). Missing the point of Stephen Merritt and thinking all there was to *The Magnetic Fields* was cleverness. *Mia culpa*.

LOUISE GRAY

Pros: The ever-prolific Dave Douglas's *Soul On Soul* and *A Thousand Evenings* get the plaudits but his post-Orrnette quartet *Leap Of Faith* on Ajaacuse should not be overlooked. While *Altogether* was a first album as leader by Douglas associate Jim Black on Warner & Brian John Schell's *Shuffle Ray* — *Great For The Resisting Angel* (New World) demanded repeated listening. Andrew Hill's welcome return with *Dusk* (Palmetto). Gene Sanborn's Phishog begins *Phishog When I Am Here*, the CBG label continues to promote lesser known composers. Earle Brown and the rediscovery of Lucia Dlugoskiowa, who sadly died earlier this year — a neglected wonder worthy to stand beside Cowell, Varèse and Orrnette Coleman. Gigs of the year: Stoebachers' Gruppen (London Royal Festival Hall), Italian Invisible Orchestra with Cecil Taylor (Riva Di Poggio, Italy), Helmut Lachenmann's *Ausgang* (Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival). Cons: The Big Brother cast, the run up to Christmas and everything else, 'wake up call', the demise of the aphorism, decline of Western civilisation continues.

ANDY HAMILTON

Pros: Experiencing Blood And Fell's sound system tour: my hearing has just returned. Finally meeting a couple of my favourite interview subjects (P. S. Petric and P. Divers), along with the rest of the Tape Center crew and my editor (Holly) at The Wire's San Francisco lecture. Rediscovering Carlos D'Alessio's scores for *India Song* and other films of Marguerite Duras — the perfect soundtrack for lazing in love. Cons: The passing of trash culture archivist Alan Bernick, in April of this past year. His published legacy, in the form of many volumes issued through his Snake Books imprint, a forever fresh

RICHARD NENDERSON

imagination occurred) The electrification of all Western households is completing slowly, original ONA is not given up yet, the audio technique through provides unlimited outfits, but too often the tunes/stories are missing. I recommend a visit to one of the few remaining savage reservations. Michel Houellebecq, in *Der Spiegel* more should be invested in sex tourism

Philip Jeck

Pros: Going to Japan, lots of European work, the Raymond Scott CD compilation *Marathon Research Inc. Masters Of Japanese Electronic Music*, CD including Kazuo Nagai's ear and side-sploring "The Hangman", Ian Beale's *Extenders* come-up-pance (many Laura it could be your last chance) Sonic Boom, Reading Peter Guralnick's *Last Train To Memphis* and *Coreless Love*, inspiring but very sad books getting me to buy *Sunrise* (the *His Complete Sun masters CDs*) "Blue Moon Of Kentucky", "Mystery Train", "That's All Right" that's why I'm here Cons: Not enough work in the UK, car and house alarms (the new Mersey sound), Ian Beale's come-uppance (he'll marry Laura and run her life) Traveling by train: that's why I'm not there (yet)

Kid Koola

This year's been a bit of a blur most of it having been spent on vehicles moving at least 50 mph the following things have travelled with me in my desert island suitcase (for sanity maintenance purposes) Blank



Philip Jeck

sketchbooks and ink pens: Beach Boys *Pet Sounds*, album *Sly And The Family Stone*, "Small Talk", Fridge *Eph. Buckminster Funeboard*, "How To Make C60/62/24 In Under An Hour" Björk's *DVO*, Boards Of Canada Extra-memorable shows for me: Carpal/Mooves tour with Bullfrog, P-Love Strictly Kev, Arnon Tobin PC and OK Fox Theater, Boulder with Oetron 3030, the Greek Theater, Los Angeles with Radiohead But I'm A Cheerleader is a funny movie and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* Re-released DVDs *The Hudsucker*

Pray and Dead Alive Interesting and inspiring reading materials Anne Yen's *Doochick* and Thomas Ott's *Tales Of Error* Oh yeah I really cannot forget to mention the awe-inspiring DJ sets of Mr Strictly Kev

Rune Kristoffersen (Rune Grammafoni)

Pros: The Jimi Hendrix Experience box set, Van Der Graaf Generator box set, King Crimson reissues (*Larks' Tongues, Starless Red*), *Band Of Gypsies* DVD, *Godspeed*, *Microstoria*, *Kid A*, *Quartet For The End Of Time* (Messiaen), *Antenne Pescocci's An Acrobat's Heart*, Kim Horthay (sleepers, record, book) *Sampler 2*, *Bla*, *Smalltown Sweden*, *Harald Are Lund*, *Gya Kancheh* in Oslo, *Trygve Sæm Orchestra* in Oslo, *Nils Økland* and *Supersilent* in London, all the wonderful music waiting to be released over the next 12 months, proper distribution through ECM, finishing *Mondlight's* album after scraping unbelievable amounts of material Cons: The (almost) total absence of decent Norwegian music journalism

Christina Kubisch

I am looking forward to the year 2001 because I am completely fed up with the 'magic' number 2000 This year everything was labelled '2000' or 'millennium', from symphony concerts to soap advertisements, from mega events to children toys 2001 will (hopefully) be just a number! Anyway, the cottes, rattlesnakes and birds I listened to this autumn during my stay at the Qjersess Foundation in the Santa Cruz mountains probably didn't care about

Pros: Meeting up with Richard H Kirk in Sheffield Talking about space, music and W Von Braun at the Lux Cinema for Interference's Cosmic Cosmos night Supplying the text for Mungo's production of *Geopius Rex* at the ICA Dissecting *Logan's Run* in the Yashin Plaza with James Hyman for the *Sovik Cinema* Jim Tetter The *Amal Grand Ensemble* and The *Singing Rainforest* (the capturing hearts and minds at the Horse Hospital) Lydia Lunch and Terry Edwards at the Talk of the Town Venice Ray at the Last Chance Saloon *Business magazines* *Hill Road*, *Dragners* and *Common Cars* issue The awesome wall of noise thrown up by Therapy? at the climax of their *Asiana* show Co-presenting the *Ritz Cinema's* 10th anniversary movie due with Billy Chonsway Q&As with Annabel Chong and Finesse Whiskey Andrew HK's *Girls Own Juice* Mike Schanks' *KISS Rocks Milwaukee* T-shirt The *Futurama* and *credis* theme

KEH HOLLINGS

Pros: *Ante up* Another year of good health and getting paid to play guitar on paper, in these fine pages no less Chu-Cha Blues: watered-down beer and San Francisco sunsets at Pac-Bell (who let the dogs out?) day-long live excursions through dust and dirt, Psych rock from the Americas, Pop's long-tongued cauldrons of horn-chee-jaw: *Coke-cracking DXTLE* Zien's *Solitudes* Live -- Donovan Germaine baby! Thud Rumble and Kid Koola live band moving platens, vinyl and electronic Friends (Amal Drop!) lamely (stay clear of Shady!) and associates (Soundings: UK, KSCU and Anticon) Commercial rap out-roads the underground like what! Free your ass and your mind! Follow: *Rice Woman* A beard to end the year Hiroshi Yamashita: rest in peace and stay true to the game

Cons: Dubya chads and every vote counting: Eminem My little cousins memorizing Eminem The split second that elapses before the cocky Harvard astro-youths give way after finishing in line Harvard is so-youths The legacy of it all Static cling every time I switch records Paranoid industry-antics and who I come through with advances and the Master-heads who justify their fears Saying "See you later" to the Bay and H-H-H-H-Hey to the apple cold East Coast Friends spreading like hydra Who set the Gents out? California's Proposition 21: *Sim Shady* losing my eyesight milking my hearing and falling further out of shape Being spoken for being fucked

HUA HSU

Pros: Chasing chunks and pizza in Spring with William Hooker and Leo Randito Lester Bangs biography At *SMASH As Your Life* back in print jamming on a pit glass with AMM and killer sets by Barry Guy Steve Lacy and Rud Mahal at Evan Parker's *Free Radicals* face-to-face with Godspeed! for a slow-mo conference Lisbon's *Jazz Em Agosto* greatest festival on the face of the planet meeting Alexandre Pierrelot and Laurence De Cock at Lebon hot dogs on Maxwell Street with Rob and Rosalee Mazurek, front-porch barbecue at Alana Rodin's in Chicago soaking up the atmosphere in Fred Anderson's bar *Mazzarella* makes it to Glasgow *50 Miles Of Elbow Room* great year for jazz reassures (Actual box *Center Of The World*, *Rashad Ali* stuff *Sonny's Seven* *Amal Drop* *Powers/Future* *Drift-V-Ten* show in Glasgow *Current/Nurse* CD biography taking shape at last Yu La Tengo *Jukebox* in my living room *Geographic* records *Maher Shabaz Hash Baz* Fernando Pessoa evangelical pow-

wow with Vandermark and Gustafsson psychonovels over breakfast with Harriet Drake writing full-time at last: playing all a vision of Sarah Gooden, secret beaches in Crete having a car subterranean Scotland the Kilmarnock stories, a picnic outside Belfast, ACDC live in Glasgow next year's *Le Weekend* *Outboard* plans all is well with David Tebet and Thomas James Keenan Cons: Their drink at *Jazz Em Agosto* that quizzed me every single morning about obscure Eastern European composers so he could shake his head in disgust and proclaim "I see The Wire does not know this!" and was also convinced that a chump was an English term for someone who used plunderships close but no cigar snotty Old School squariness on the jazz panel in Lisbon Meltzer and Trachtenberg compiled and deflated John Smith's legendary record dept closed by claims the hellfire force that is the Lighthouse's Electric City music exhibition missing Col in London the fucking Arty Dodge's bunks delts squares creeps and bring-downs

DAVID KEENAN

Pros: Small friendly festivals like the Dutch Electronic Arts Festival, which included a brilliant talk by Kadoy Eshai, or the Cologne Bridge Festival, which featured installations by Ron Kuniya and Paul Panhagen Other finds this year include the Casino in the remote Belgian town of Genk which puts on concerts by the Wers of Phil Niblock and Pierre Bastien Dornmud also has its moments thanks to *Play* a German organization that programmes offbeat experimental electronic music from around the world in a run-down cellar for tiny, but attractive audiences

the new millennium. They followed their own rhythm of light and darkness: seasons, weather. They didn't even seem to bother about the continuous stream of aeroplanes crossing the isolated landscape by day and night. Silence was such a rare event that it was intense like an explosion once it happened. My next soundtrack will be about birds and birds, with two wings and with four wings.

I found some more aspects of nature in the very centre of Berlin: at the newly founded museum for sound art, Klangkunstforum Park Kolonnenaden. In the large basement of a business building I experienced a sense of quietness and concentration that you would expect to find in the countryside. Most impressive were the sound umbrellas by Austrian architect and audio designer Bernhard Leitner. Walking from sculpture to sculpture, I listened to the songs of crickets with all the silence in between. Maybe this was not a natural silence, but certainly it was a silence I had not found in the Californian mountains.

Francisco López

drifting holes in the clouds,
steering at digital time counters,
sweating upon knobs and trackpads
checking e-mail backstage,
testing the nuances of pizza, burritos and sushi in
different continents, meeting newborn babies from
friends in Jpegs, carrying weighing instruments,
brushing the teeth at 30,000 feet
such is the life of the electronic age troubadour

Gary Lucas

Pros: Film *Joe* (Joseph Losey, 1962) — a hitherto undiscovered (by me) classic of Euro-erotic art cinema. Jeanne Moreau smoulders magnificently presiding over Stanley Baker's ultimate degradation — woo! Music *Genuine Live* 1966 — Bob Dylan And The Hawks, an eight CD bootleg of select board tapes of Dylan's greatest rock 'n' roll stand, fantastic packaging and notes. *Manhattan Research Inc.*, Raymond Scott, as an occasional soundtrack composer, these electronic vignettes from the 60s strike a profound chord with me. Now does anybody have any tapes of Percy Grainger's electronic experiments/inventions? Books *Captain Beefheart* by Mike Barnes, this book actually got me back into listening to the work again (and what glorious work it is!), something I'd suppressed for about 15 years. *The She Devils* by Pierre Louys, Roy Stuart Vol 3. Gigs: London Dingwells, 21 November. solo guitar for the BBC's *Mong* it show — an overwhelming experience for me, old anglophile that I am, like a childhood dream come true, audiences in NYC rarely exhibit such emotion! Merkin Concert Hall, Lincoln Center NYC, 14 September, solo guitar. A Tribute To Robert Johnson — an honour to be on a bill with John Renbourn. This gig, broadcast over National Public Radio, led to a commission from Mayes Firms (Gimme Shelter) to score a new documentary for them (they heard the broadcast by accident, then tracked me down through the Internet). Cons: No new Teletubbies episodes (bring 'em back now —)



Rob Mazurek

The year 2000 was a whirlwind. The following are some highlights and not so highlights: The Ex in Rome were burning! Woodcut at the Hdeout, burning! Rocking in Japan with Atsushi, Ogi, Hashim and crew. Ak's solo record on Mokka. Takemura Bettina and Thrill Jockey people always burn! The Meltdown fest with Jim O'Rourke. Drinkin' grapes with Giuseppe and Fernando in Florence. Amazing cuisine in Florence. Muscus Conventus concert with Chicago. ➤➤

Cons: Huge mega-festivals like Sonar that cater to mass audiences. Prestigious concerts in prestigious venues

RAHMA KHAZAM

Pros: Echoes of a discursive melancholia bouncing round. Martine's skull in Ensurante Neubaussen's 'Die Belinde' (Heel Des Landes) and through the canyons opened up when the backing harmonies rip away from Bob Dylan's vocal on his version of 'I Am The Walrus'. Thomas' *Bob Dylan Live 1966* GBS eight CD box. Damiana Galas at the Barbican. Col live — and how! Die Todliche Doris Website. The Dead onward and forever through Dick's Pits 16-19 and the Filmore East. Taiwanese film director Hou Hsiao-hsien's season at the NFT. The Mike adventures in Tokyo and Osaka (special thanks to the British Consul's David Elliott) and further afield for the North Country blues of Tugan shaman maestro Chisao Yamada and his pupa at his Yamada live house. Hiroshi — plus Ken Hano on discs with Coe. Hano and Bailey, late-discovering Nagisa Naka and folk in Aina Nihika record store in Sapporo, and year-kending in the inspired company of Teioume Taicho woman Funko Elliott (Treacherous Women Of Imperial Japan: Routledge, 1997).

Cons: No such thing — 'Everything's grief' (Derek Bailey)

NIBA KOPF

Pro: The jazz industry's unquenchable need for new product has brought us to the point where much music that was uncommon, experimental or merely overlooked from the 40s to the 60s is being reissued, bringing to light exceptional work done by lesser known artists like Tony Scott. Teddy Charles. George Russell. Charlie Ventura. Ralph Burns. Tony

Fruscali. Manuel Sosa. Howard Riley. Tony Oxley as well as uncovering valuable, sometimes revelatory archival material from Sweden, Italy, Britain, Germany, Poland, Argentina. History is being rewritten every day.

Con: The depressing American political landscape. The intrusive all-consuming downside to electronic technology. 'Fighting Over the Possession' (Cole Porter) Waiting for the mail

ART LANGE

Pros: Favorite songs: Mike Watt & The Suck & The Purr Of Hairs in NYC. Papa M in London. Michael Schumacher Powerbook concerts in NYC. Derek Bailey's month at Tonic. Some crucial releases: Xenakis's *Persepolis*, Brodman's *Apples*, Cardew's *The Green Learning*, The Beatles' *White Album* in mono (Japanese bootleg) and Riley's *Music For The Gift*. In print: Joe Eusterhaus's *American Rhapsody*. David Bernier's *Actual As anything* by Geoffrey O'Brien or Jonathan Rosenbaum. On screen: James Toback's *Black & White*. Chris Wilkins's *The Tanager Shoots Fire*. Philip Seymour Hoffman, the Jean Eustache retrospective at Walker Reside in NYC. *Plaster On Planet* (TV). Best song: 'No Chorus' by Dr Doom (released in 99 but still the best song). Best album: *The For Carnation*. Best personal rediscoveries: The Verlaines and Bryan MacLean. Best coming of age story involving Hayward Ferguson (and so much more). Hr Rob Mazurek.

Cons: Getting SD e-mails a day from the MEILA Foundation list about the La Monte-Tony CD lead. daily e-mails soliciting a vote for Ralph Nader. air travel, every word written by Gail Marcus this year lead, judging from Double Trouble in the last decade. Big disappointments: The Milken/Loches compendiums (too long). Nurse Betty (as bad as Neil LaBute's best two movies were

good): the sound art exhibition at PSI in Queens (at first in a museum building to commercially available CDs on headphones?)

ALAN LIGHT

Pros: Rhoad Dales and John Butcher in a Chiswick church. John Wall in a Southwark church. Parker/Guy/Horlitz at the Varsity. Rober-Nelson in Bern. Rigg foods at the South Bank. Walter Marchetti at the LMC festival. Trips to Berlin at New Year and the US during the election debacle. Cons: Moving house. Expenditure population. Notably re-assembly, apologetic/lyric mobs, the culture of naming and shaming (but I'll make an exception for my new noisy neighborhood). Gail's

WILL MONTGOMERY

Pros: The relative explosion in the documentation of electroacoustic improvisation: dual largely to labels like Ensembles, Fringes, Sonars, Intrastive and Queens. The linking of small pockets of like-minded individuals in a network for improvising musicians to tour the US Midwest. Dozens of fantastic shows across North America, including Le Quian Nirth and Tri-D in Minneapolis. John Butcher at Chicago's Elmy Bottle. Keith Rowe solo and AMPM at Boston's Autumn Unleashing and Fred Von Hove's Quartet at Vancouver's Du Fluorant Jazz Festival.

Cons: The prevalence of FM radio. The jazz/classical record store I run for a living burning down. Reading an interview with Kon Burns regarding his upcoming jazz documentary and learning that he will have the last 40 years of the music in one to a single two hour episode. The continued ignorance of major jazz records. ➤➤

Underground Duo in Florence. Isotope 217 rolled the van gone! BO and almost came out OK. Dancer in the Dark, burning. It was nice to see Ian Penman become a better writer by employing ISOTOPE 217 TECHNIQUE. Susana Baca at the Hothouse. Orton Socket finally leaves the house. Alana Rocklin and company at Denmark. BROKEBACK THE SEA AND CAKE THE ETERNALS. David Keenan. Stereolab. My beautiful, inspiring wife Rosalee Remor De Souza. SOMA. So many more things but no time. Happiness to all.

Pauline Oliveros

Pros. Uma, a CD by Susan Alcorn — pedal steel guitar on Lovelander Recordings (lmlr@aol.com). She has opened this beautiful instrument in amazing ways. Her concert at MECA in Houston on 24 November was the best. The Space Between with Dana Reason (piano), Philip Gelb (shakuhachi) and Pauline Oliveros (accordion) at University of Colorado: an unlikely combo performing together in a beautiful acoustic venue with three different tuning systems as an advantage — B September. *Lunar Opera*. Deep Listening For-Tunes at Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors 17 August, with 300 performers (www.artsworld.org/lunar). Celebration of Pauline Oliveros 50 Years Of Composing (1951–2000) Four cellists dancing with their instruments harnessed to their bodies with sashes — Norm Adams, Jessica Catron, Brigitte Meyer, Anne Bourne at Plan B in Santa Fe. 5 August. Deep Listening Concert at the Knitting Factory, 13 June with The New Circle Quartet featuring Rosi Herten (violin), Monique Buzante



(trombone), Leaf Miller (percussion), Jackie Pickett (bass), Pauline Oliveros (accordion). *Isone-spoken word*: Barbara Barg (spoken word). Cooperative, immense music making. The evening included a spectacular solo sax piece by Joe McPhee. Norman Lowrey and his singing masks, Straylight with Geoff Gersh (electric guitar), Charles Cohen (Buchla Easel) and Jason Finkelman (percussion). Best audience: MECA, Houston TX listening to Quartet with Dave Dove (trombone), Tom Bickley (recorder). Susan Alcorn (pedal steel)

guitar) and Pauline Oliveros (accordion). No one coughed and you could hear a pin drop — 12 May. The music of Dick Robinson of Decatur Georgia — *Carnar Band* — Live from Atlanta with Andrew Deutsch, Peer Bode, Dick Robinson and Pauline Oliveros at Atlanta College of Art, 16 April. Con. Still not enough women visible in creative music.

Stephen Pastel

Sometimes modern living can seem like an over-slick record, train chases aside. In an atmosphere of discrete sophistication, I never heard anyone making music as eclectic as Sonny Sharrock's *Black Woman* resound. Most music seemed like commentary rather than brilliant statement, but not Barry Guy's Orchestra For Alan Dawe which featured Bill Wells somewhere. Bill finally got a bit of respect this year. Then there was Maher Shalal Hash Baz and their beautiful raw music. We were proud to represent both through a new Pastel-styled Domino imprint. Geographic Glasgow's best record shop (John Smith's) closed down and I relocated my workplace to Katrina's flat, with Magistral, Mum and Nooki Zushi on their soundtrack. A sweet memory is the Future Pilot AKA album playback with Sushi's family and groovy film maker David MacKenzie, our future collaborator. Best of all, Katrina and I went to Zakynthos, checked into the best (60s-styled) hotel in town and hung out on our balcony, drinking wine and playing Morricone and Chantal Goya, while speculating on goings-on in the harbour below.

Labels who seem intent on supporting the Burns/Wynton Pansake also, and therefore bringing jazz to an untimely death.

JOH C THOROGAN

Pros. A year of frantic travelling: seeing San Francisco through the windows of Tom Thaxton's flame painted 71 AMC Javelin. I never thought I'd be impressed by a car until I sat in it getting completely lost in Tokyo (and buying large amounts of useless things in spectacular packaging), playing records at WHF in Berlin, the view of Crete's Lasty Plateau. On stage Pat Smith's devastatingly beautiful, very personal William Blake tribute in St James's Church, the ecstatic Cat sat at the RH, soulful glitch Nobukazu Takemura in San Sebastian, Philip Jeck and DJ Eye in Osaka, Sonic Youth in Brussels, the Aussie Rialler show at the MUTEK festival in Montreal, and as always, the annual Dionysian feast of Barcelona's Sonar with musical highlights too many to list. Meeting herons, Kim Gordon and Brigitte Fontaine in Paris. Staring up the Wee Seasons Live gigs at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, interference event series still going strong after two and a half years.

Goss. The lack of female colleagues. The amount of vacuous systair crossover magazines completely lacking any kind of meaningful content. Too damn busy all the time.

ANNE HILDE NESET

Pros. Celebrating New Year on Easter Island. Laguna Beach California. The Griffin Observatory. Cool at Laguna Festival. Half Burgers more stupid looking and Ultramar more than I know what to do with. Tech Modern. RTX in Washington DC. The appearance of Extreme's long promised 50 CD Herbwork box. Rediscovering The Fall. Tintex (Thanks Russell). Electric Wizard

Goneth. Baggs. Gamelan. Finally seeing the sculptures of Simeon Sculabin in a museum setting. Derek Bailey's "Feedback" letter to The Wire 2002. Captain Beefheart by Mike Barnes. Scoring a copy of La Monte Young's *Drift Study* on eBay. Cons. eBay. Encountering tall grown men who think they look cool riding along on those micro-scooters. The Beatles. *Arctophony*. Good movie famine. The seemingly never ending rantful. Baby/Daddy Boy.

EDWIN POWNCEY

Pros. Kid A post-rock lives! UK Garage defying the Law of Subcultural Exclusion (and pop crossover overexposure) to enjoy its fourth fabulous summer in a row (bad times soon come, though). Two-step masterpieces by Archaic, TKS. Sovereign, too many others. Rap getting wider sounding, with sick tracks like Ludacris's "What's Your Fantasy?" Jay-Z's "Do It Again" and "Snoopy Track". Do Brat's "That's What I'm Looking For". Dancehall's creative upsurge: Capleton. Elephant Man. Unknown riddims galore. Sheer delight: Isoler. Herbert mix CD, Quakoo, A&N To OX, Nelly. Ananda Project, Ke606. Pole. Green Velvet. Ohm's trope of avant-electronica. Schematic. Clicks + Guts. Associates releases. Woods. Paul Morley's *Naming*, the next-generation post-brain-drum remixes in cyberspace with swivels like Freestylegiggle. New York. London. Paris. Nunch. Shylocking. et al.

Cons. Election-induced nausea as revision struggles with the futility of disgust this morning as the world discovered what a chad was. Grim reality of UK Garage as club culture fuck with the press. Loads of good music, too much actually, but still no new strategies or fresh-making meta-context.

SIMON REYNOLDS

Pros. Other people's acts of kindness, generosity and appreciation, cheap meals out, alcohol, meeting performances. Six By Seven (finally, a forward looking guitar) and Seagrass. Stealing the show at Labradford's Festival Of Drifting. *Alma A Room For Some Art*, *Memoria*, *Beau Travail*. Finding (at last) my part-time taste degree, finally reading Greg Marano's *Leszek*. Traces. Alan Wildercombe inadvertently encouraging music outbursts of dope smoking, the strangely satisfying election chaos in America. optimism.

Cons. The serious lack of millennium bug derived chaos, civil unrest, looting, etc. the usual ignorance and prejudice. Alan Wildercombe intentionally encouraging music outbursts of bigotry self-doubt performing onerous tedious tasks for muscular reviews, being misunderstood self-pity, pessimism.

TOM RIDGE

Pros. Unbelievable nervous tension and overwhelmingly ecstatic reviews with Fushitsusha at the Garage. Leaving freestyle with The Acid Mothers Temple, the continuing adventures of the Japanese psychedelic underground, the launch of Aufgehoben No Process and Junior Heat Recordings, master session with Gary Smith for Aufgehoben 2. Turkish psychedelia. More Ralies, even more Ral continued privilege of doctoral research, knowledge and enthusiastic trends. KTX and Morton.

Cons. Face to face with Harro and unable to speak. timeliness/ethic as... the lack thereof. continued grind of doctoral research and concomitant annihilation of the continuing reduction of all that matters to mere utility. Britain in general. telephone, in particular.

STEPHEN ROBINSON

People Like Us

Pros: Moving from an idyllic little town to an urban dump and being glad about it. Napster Travelling Sonar at Barcelona — social event of the year. Visiting NYC, going on WFMU. Coli, Royal Festival Hall — Persistence is All "EMF" at Komedia, Brighton. The rather good Rather Interesting label. Hours of fun on www.ssslyght.com until a bunch of children got involved and made us all feel old and stupid. Little legal hassle from sampling. The support of friends and, of course, Soleilmoon and Hot Air. Collaborating live with Matmos in London, February 2001.

Cons: Having to KICK my computer to get it to 'boot up'. Of the small venues in London many are gloomy, smoky and dark — rather like snorkelling in a plastic glass of old piss. Seeing some small labels act like big ones. Possible legislation on MP3 file sharing, despite our history lessons concerning home taping.

Reynolds

Best Album: Hasi Adkins Cocks Collection
Best Guitar Player: John Lee Hooker/Junior Kimbrough
Best Composer: Kenneth Gaburo
Best European Band: Faust/Two
Best Video: Johnny Cash *The Man, His World And His Music*
Best Female Voice: Yoko Ono/Emmylou Harris
Best Guitar Solo: Lou Reed in "Like A Possum"
Best Harstyle: Tony Conrad/Alan Vega
Best Electronic Album 1969-2000: George Harrison
Electronic Sounds

Pros: Incontrovertible proof that American democracy is a sham, the English speaking world slowly recognising that *Dunkin' Master 2* is the greatest film of all time, Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*, Heavy Metal regaining its rightful throne, the three mph minimum pedestrian speed limit on Oxford Street — finally, some enlightened public policy. *God Of Coolery*

Cons: Incontrovertible proof that American democracy is a sham, that even one person voted for the Shrub, mobile phones invading my space (bring back the boombox), people who don't know how to walk, most of the groups that allowed Heavy Metal to regain its rightful throne, the privatization of the UK's terminal decline, my cat Miquis dying (RIP), consensus.

PETER SHAPIRO

Pros: Gerres exploded in all directions this year, with Vladimir Delany going up House and Francisco Lopez hammering out Metal, but the breaking news is the broken beat of the West London sound. Call it no jazz, future soul or what you will, the bastard child of House and drum 'n' bass, pioneered by labels like 2000 Black, People, and Laws Of Motion, reinvigorated dancefloor soul, promising ample opalescent pleasures in 2001. Live highlights in 2000 included Herbert Lopez, and Neon Phoson at Solar, and Burnt Friedman. Pole, Jan Jelinek and a whole mess of like-minded souls at CCAC's phenomenal Rooms For Listening symposium. Thanks be to Kit Clayton, Kod66, the Blechmonds, Betalacqua et al. San Francisco proved a fine and fertile place to be the year.

Cons: The New Economy's continued creation of the New San Francisco, resulting in artist evictions along with an increasingly

Best Bestseller: The Bible

Best Keyboard Solo of the Century: Sun Ra's "Joyful Noise"
Best Guitar solo: "Guitar solo"
Best FX: Dala Lama
Best Signature Sunglasses: Roy Orbison
Best Lost Album: Montes Cuando Brille El Tiempo
Best Bass Player: Hugh McIntire (Nihilist Spasm Band)
Best No-Mind: Miguel Tomasari
Best Presence Onstage: Neil Young
Best Concert: Pauline Oliveros & Reynolds live in NYC
Best Password: 16-1, 23-4, 5-9, 18-5, 11-5, 10-4
Best Plastic Artist: Malcolm Mooney
Best Film: *Solar, Solar* Leonardo Favio
Best 'New' Artist: R Stewie Moore
Best Future Album: Robert Wyatt (whatever is coming after *Shleep*)

Scanner

2000 has been the most positive year for me with the most eclectic of experiences: spending a week in the hills of California with Hamza El Din, David Lang & Christian Wolff sharing ideas and dinner, collaborating with Annie Gosfield in NYC, meeting Lee Ranaldo, participating in Sonic Boom at the Hayward Gallery, spreading Free Chocolate Love with David Shea, re-soundtracking Alchoville at London's Imax Cinema, the opening of my Science Museum installation, the entire 20>2000 schoolgroup playing in Berlin and Linz, hearing John Zorn at the Barbican, David Thomas & His Two Pale Boys at the South Bank Centre, Segur Ros slowly imploding in London, the birth of Babette. ➤

glamified club culture and a palpable lack of venues where music matters more than schmoozing and booze

PHILIP SHERBURNE

Pros: Ghostface saying "Ice-D-Down: Cuban Coolidge", Numark's Paul C. impersonation in Jurassic 5's "Monkey Bars", For Love magazine listing DJs Soundmachine (Raleigh) and Debonator (Philly), Quasimoto using Alan Gorguer's meteor shower to make the sound of children clomping up wooden steps in orthopaedic pigskin shoes, but "Cron's just a beat". Sly Stallone's *The Band* — *Best Hip-Hop* magazine out, photo of mysterious undersea duck-knight from Mysterious Island proudly displayed on Russell Simmons's Website, children's pop-up book exhibit at Brooklyn Library, R&B moments with MF Doom, Professor Nils Holstrom's insect findings, leaving my bad knees in the dust while running to Ian Pooley's "900 Degrees", Rotary Connector's "I Am The Black Gold Of The Sun" and "2+2=?" by Bob Seeger System, the eggman freestyle in the Bolex Brothers's animated *Keep A Day Place And Away From Children*, walking through an alfresco tree alphabet in the North Carolina mountains while listening to Neon Fuzz, George Saunders's institutional memoirs, watching *The Abominable Dr Phibes* with my love, Cons: Drip dry drill, DJ Assault (give me Ghetto Style over Getto Tek), Eminem fans at North Carolina State Fair, "Rare Groove" Websites that charge \$59.99 for original pressings of A Tribe Called Quest singles — get off the clock, Trevelly Corporation the suffixation with 'delic', cutesy coverage of Ol' Dirty Bastard's ordeals by smug wack writers, and "pooner animation in even wackier science fiction movies, realising every day that as soon as you think you know shit you don't know" ➤

Jazz

Sun Ra The Great Lost Sun Ra Albums: Cymbals & Crystal Spheres (Evidence)
New York Art Quartet 35th Reunion (DMM)
Joe Harriott Genius (Jazz Academy)
Chicago Underground Duo Synesthesia (Thrill Jockey)
Willford Graves Stones (Tzadik)
Sun Ra & His Solar Myth Arkestra Life Is Splendid (Total Energy)
Ken Vandermark's Joe Harriott Project Straight Lines (Atavisk)
Andrew Hill Disc (Palmetto)
Alexander Von Schlippenbach Trio Complete Combustion (FMP)
Cecil Taylor Melancholy (FMP)
Witches & Devils At The Empty Bottle (Knitting Factory)
Anthony Braxton Live At The Knitting Factory Piano Quartet 1994 Vol 2 (Leo)
Susie Ibarra Trio Radiance (Hopscotch)
Anderson/Drake/Jordan/Parker Two Days In April (Eremite)
Dave Douglas A Thousand Evenings (RCA Victor)
The Macks Hanging Gardens (Fish Of Milk)
David S Ware Surrendered (Columbia)
Chicago Underground Trio Flamethrower (Delmark)
Dave Douglas Leap Of Faith (Arabesque)
Test Live Test (Eremite)

HipHop

Anti-Pop Consortium Tragic Epilogue (75 Ark)
Outkast Stankonia (La Face/Arista)
Kid Koala Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (Ninja Tune)
Company Flow & Cannibal Ox Five Songs From Def Jux (Def Jux)
Ghostface Killah Supreme Clientele (Epic)
MF Doom Operation: Doomsday (Fonzie 'Em)
Wu-Tang Clan The W (Loud)
Quasimoto The Unseen (Stone's Throw)
Dose One & Boom Bip Circles (Mush)
Infesticons Gun Hill Road (Big Dada)
Spectre The End (Wordsound)
Dilated Peoples The Platform (Capitol)
Mr Dibbs Live In Memphis (Stereo-Type)
Mike Ladd Welcome To The Afterlife (Ozone)
Jurassic 5 Quality Control (Interscope)

Modern Classical

Gordon Mumma Studio Retrospective (Lovely Music)
annis Xenakis Persepolis (Fractal)
Bernard Parmegiani Pop Eclectic (Plate Lunch)
Ingram Marshall Ikon And Other Early Works (New World)
Horton Feldman All Piano (London Hall)
Horton Feldman Complete Music For Violin And Piano (Mode)
Charlemagne Palestine Karenina (Durtro)
annis Xenakis Complete Works For Solo Piano (Mode)
Mauricio Kagel Playback Play (Winter & Winter)
Salvatore Sciarrino Infinito Nero (Karos)
George Antheil Ballet Mecanique (BMF)
Lois V Vierk River Beneath The River (Tzadik)
Arvo Part I Am The True Vine (ECM)
Elliot Carter Clarinet Concerto/Symphonia (Deutsche Grammophon)
Fernando Grillo Fluvine (Ampersand)
Faustin Velen The Eternal (Rune Grammofon)
Michael Finnissy Gershwin Arrangements (Meter)
John Schott Shuffle Play: Elegies For The Recording Angel (New World)
Charlemagne Palestine SchiongofidalaUvdrone (Organ Of Corti)
Anthony Braxton Trillium R (Braxton House)

Outer Limits

Terry Riley Music For The Gift (Organ Of Corti)
Raymond Scott Manhattan Research Inc (Basta)
Yuichiro Sakamoto BITTB (Sony)
Otomo Yoshihide Cathode (Tzadik)
Angus MacLise Brain Damage In Oklahoma City (Quakebasket)
Pauline Oliveros Primordial/Lift (Table Of The Elements)
Cole/Conrad/MacLise/Young/Tazeelsa Inside The Dream Syndicate Vol 1: Day Of Niagara (1965) (Table Of The Elements)
Philip Jeck Vinyl Coda I-III (Intermedium)
Merzbow Merzbow (Extrema Special Editions)
Christian Marclay & Otomo Yoshihide Moving Parts (Asphodel)
Fennesz/O'Rourke/Rehberg The Magic Sound Of Enno'berg (Mego)
Falcato The Bear The One Burned Ma (Misra)
Francisco López Untitled #92 (Mego)
Steve Roden The Radio (Sonoris)
Dean Roberts And The Black Moths Play The Grand Cinema (Riometti)
Rob Ellis Music For The Home (Leaf)
Hermann Nitsch Das 6 Tage Spiel Des Orgeln (Mysterien Theaters (Organ Of Corti))
Peter Cusack The Horse Was Alive The Cow Was Dead (LMC)
Fennesz/Rosy Parlano Live (Synaesthesia)
Mike Cooper Kribbat (Hipshot)

Critical Beats

Company Flow & Cannibal Ox "DPA" (Def Jux)
Bloodclaat Gangsta Youth "Kill Or Be Killed" (Full Watts)
Jay Z "Big Pimpin'" (Def Jam/Roc-A-Fella)
Architects "Bodygroove" (Relentless)
Techno Animal vs Dalek "Megaton/Classical Homicide" (Matador)
Outkast "BOB" (La Face/Arista)
Kid Entropy "So Far/Pan Am" (Semiconscious Media)
Non-Phixion "Black Helicopters" (Matador)
Ghostface Killah "Apollo Kids" (Epic)
Common "The Light" (MCA)
Kid Scum & I-Sound "Mortal Clash" (Ambush)
Recluse "Can't Take It/Absence Of One" (Planet E)
Kid606 "Attitude" (V.M.V.)
Klute "We Are The Ones/Drive Down" (Certificate 18)
Christoph De Babalon Vs Kid606 "Spill Series" (Fat Cat)

Compilations A-Z

Bollywood Funk (Outcaste)
Calprissina (Calprissina)
Cleveland Confidential (Overground)
Clicks + Cuts (Mille Plateaux)
Deep Ska (Proper)
Definition Of Ill (Comasetik)
Disco Not Disco (Strut)
Doughboys, Playboys & Cowboys (Proper)
Dropnin' Science: The Best Of Cold Chiller (BBE)
Early Modulations: Vintage Volts (Calprissina)
Fagjazz (Comatonse)
Frikyiwa Collection 1 (Frikyiwa)
Hitler & Hell: War Songs (Trikont)
Hmm (Sprawl Imprint)
Jazzactuel (Charly)
Kid606 And Friends Vol 1 (Tigerbeat6)
Le Jazz Non: A Collection Of Norwegian Noise (Rune Grammofon)
New Orleans Funk (Soul Jazz)
Ohm: Early Gurus Of Electronic Music (Ellipsis Arts)
Plus & Classics 1990-97 (Novamute)
Schoolhouse Funk (Cali-Tex)
Slickin' On The Frets: The Hawaiian Steel Guitar Phenomenon (Yazoo)
Solezides' Greatest Bumps (Quannum)
Studio One Rockers (Soul Jazz)
Teenage Shutdown series (Teenage Shutdown)
T Zero 0 (Touch)
Unclassical 0.1 (Sub Rosa)
Voices In My Lunchbox (Plug Research)
Women Of Rembetika (Rouder)
Xen Cuts (Ninja Tune)

"Lily Tonne, my stand up comic routine thinly disguised as an 'artist's talk' around Australia, and without doubt the most memorable moment was meeting Smokey the Koala in Brisbane and holding him as he fell asleep on my shoulder

Terre Thaemlitz

Pros: Best releases: Ultra-red's *Structural Adjustments* (Mille Plateaux) and the CD rerelease of Sylvester's *Too Hot To Sleep* (Fantasy). My big news is that at the end of 2000 I am permanently leaving Oakland and relocating to Tokyo. Just as big for me was the August release of my *Fogazz* compilation (Comatonse), which had been delayed for nearly two years. And I can't forget that I saw my first 'real' rock 'n' roll concert ever — STYX! Although Dennis DeYoung was sadly missed, Tommy Shaw is still as beautiful as ever.
Cons: I will miss spending time with my dear friends in Oakland, especially author David Pescovitz. Another bummer is having to sell my 71 APC Javelin SST just as I finally got it looking right. And I can't forget that I saw my first 'real' rock 'n' roll concert ever — STYX!

Ultra-red

Pro AND Con: Election 2000. Green candidate Ralph Nader was castigated for participating in a system purportedly open to any citizen or party. As usual, very few people participated and those few couldn't decide on who they wanted. The problems of the vote counting system were unveiled — I hope people don't think Florida is the only state that has problems with its

shit, Triton & Trinity keyboard abuses, cruel people donning expensive togas, bad indie HipHop and the bad DJ Premier clones that produce it, rapin' with Roni Size, RJD3 Screw, Don Martin, Sach of The Nones, Edward Gorey, Rob One, Tito Puente. And of course a deluxe bazook goes out to us, Fantasy Three once said, "the bitches in the city"

DAVE TOPPINS

Pros: For a change, a lot more pros than cons, a lot of which are mixed up in my own year. The opportunity to curate Sonic Boom at the Hayward Gallery was a significant moment for me — the proof that a large audience can get excited about sound art. Of all the traveling I did this year, three trips to Japan were hugely stimulating. They introduced me to the work of a lot of great musicians working in areas ranging from sound art, onkyo and noise to film composition, exotica and digital electronics. My first visit to Iceland was also a revelation, both for the landscape and people and for the unique music and literature scene there. Favourite gigs this year were Ryoji Ikeda at the GEH, Ryoichi Sakamoto at Sadie's Wells and the amazing multinational jam session I saw at Heights Gallery in Tokyo. My own favourites were my trip with Jin H Kim and Frank Perry at the LMC Festival, with Max Eastman at ICC in Tokyo and with Bob Cobbing and Paul Burwell at the Klinker.
Cons: The usual. The economics don't get any easier unless you want to spend your whole life in departure lounges.

DAVID TOOP

Pros: Piane and Max (2) for putting up with the music, the return of The New York Art Quartet, Misha Mengelberg's basketball camp, playing the Muthouse Festival (40 degrees on stage, and just a

electoral process

Cons: This polite fascism assuming free markets are equivalent to increased democracy when all empirical evidence suggests the opposite. Musically speaking, reactionary formalist electronica. **France**
Pros: The Nonzero Sum Games exhibit with Dispute Resolution Services salvaging the Smithsonian sweatshop exhibit from dumpsters. Musically speaking, Thiermeyer's Introspection, Los Samplers' Descargos and The Associates. In performance, Benjamin Britten's modernist-romantic Peter Grimes performed by The LA Opera at the Chandler Pavilion. Cage's *Aulos Epitaphs* by The Southwest Chamber Music Society. Lastly, that exquisite sonic boom emanating from the streets of DC, Philly, LA, Prague, Seoul, Melbourne, etc.

VIVM

2000 got worse and worse and worse and most importantly things will continue to get worse and worse and worse and worse through 2001. 2000 was the year of the con. Hope you can be subjective, the following makes up VIVM's cons and pros, work it out for yourselves. Cabbage throwing and pigs' trotters at the Sonar, Chris De Burger, wheelchair wheelies in Amsterdam to "Mouldy Old Dough", Scanner + DJ Spooky, CMN Tours, Lennon's 60th birthday VIVM abuse set in York which made the students cry, sick love and its universal appeal, Bob Mills and the annual Edinburger chicken/pig, hearting cap, VIVM/KPS, Alec Empire's upbringing, the Queen Mother 100 year old robot con, Heegaarden, The

Manchester music scene itself the biggest con on the planet, Chesh's Millennium Dome fiasco, Borussia Dortmund and their spirit of 1997, Rod Dodd, Mampal INV, Shakini Stevens and his kidnapping of us and abduction behind the green door, Kid Sex/Osick, 24 years, Arts Council funded events — avoid them, Catalyst in Belfast for blinkers — the Guinness and the tower invite, Bill Drummond's 45, brainwashed whitters, Fabulous, Bald and Animal for support above and beyond the call. 2000, still love and attitude to the rest of you. 2001 will see VIVM succeed in its bid to become the worst. Here's to it.

Jon Whitney

Pros: 2000 was a fun year. With performances by Chicks On Speed and VIVM at Sonar, it's nice to see that the world of electronic musicians isn't only bald Europeans or serious-yet-quirky Japanese guys. Electronic music fans and musicians need to smile more and stop checking e-mail on stage. 2001 will see a shift in popular culture, as it happened with Grunge and Techno in 91, synth pop and New Romantics in 81, and spacey funk and old synths in the early 70s. The end of every decade seems to harvest mediocrity in the popular culture. I can't say what the next trend will be but I'm predicting it'll hit in 2001.
Cons: This is the year the corporate music industry went from ignoring the Internet to fearing the Internet. Over the next year they'll be buying the Internet and swallowing up more organisations and resources, branding them with their own propaganda and filth.

finger in the process). Downtown Music Gallery's \$10 CD sales, passive smoking with Sunny Murray, Mr Thomas's Ohio House in Manchester, my new computer, George W Bush's memorable quote, "It is time for the human race to enter the solar system", which I take to mean he likes Sun Ra.

Cons: All the other memorable quotes by George W Bush, AOL, the French postal system (obviously they all read The Wire since my copy never arrives on time), still can't find a copy of Noah Howard's Black Ark, upstairs and downstairs neighbours, mobile phones interfering with the long-suffering Walkman, too many records, never enough time.

DAN WARBURTON

Pros: Dominique Jeunot, president of Les Filles de l'Invention delivering a holiday oration on the Mudiashark, Marie-Angélique Beulier playing Vicks and Catton on flutes, Paul Hession. Pat Thomas and Nick Beck's session at The Terrace, Matt 4-Furt at The Boniville Centre — Philo Marks the Great Dada of Beat Def'nitionation, Gamma's Ongang War on Sensible Borgness, the three DBs: Derek Bailey, Dallas Boner, Doggie, Simon H. Fell's orchestral waxy monster Kaledoskylar at Leeds University (will some publisher kindly sign the composer before he explodes?), the Northern Bolshhevik Proak Posa, Mad Pade & Brandon Burton's "It Depends How I Feel On The Day", the Muffin Man with Jimmy Carl Black, Goethe, Cecil James Carter and RSS, Escher's colour theory, the Rancid sounds of Ryles Nashist.

Cons: Flu, the National Front trying to close down my local in Somerset Town, canidases craving avant cachet, fumbling incompetence as the New Cool.

BEN WATSON

This year's charts were compiled from the votes of the following contributors. Each contributor's record of the year is shown in brackets. Cive Bel (Kid Koola Copied Tunnel Syndrome) Chris Blackford (K. Saraby) Qpus Ciovincinococum Ben Bortwick (Ultra-red Structural Adjustments) Julian Cowley (Parker/Guy/Lytton And Marilyn Crispell After Appleby) Christoph Cox (David Grubbs The Spectrum Between) Alan Cummings (Michio Sato On A Cold Cold Night) Phil England (Doroteo & Marley Posing Parts) Kodwo Eshun (Hoodynin's Farewell to Me) Matt Ilyche (Kinny Process Team 1994-97) Sasha Freen (Ghostslike Killah Supreme Clientele) Natalie Graven (Madonna Music) Louise Gray (Einstürzende Neubauten Silence Is Sexy) Andy Hamilton (Andrew Hill Dusk) Richard Henderson (Various Artists: Sento Sango, Shono Other Musics From Zimbabwe) Tony Herrington (The Neck's Hanging Gardens) Ken Hollings (Raymond Scott Manhattan Research) Inci Hua Hsu (Gulakat Stankonia David Keenan (Carnet 93 Sleep Has His House) Rahma Khazim (Phorotona Model 3, Step 2) Bika Pop (Fushususha / Sow It That Which Before / Could Only Sense) Art Lange (Iskra 1903 Chapter One 1970-72) Will Montgomery (Rijoy Ikeda Marx) Jon C Morgan (Guillermo Gregorio Degress Of Iconomy) Anne Hilde Nesser (Philip Jeck Vinyl Code -It) Edwin Pouncey (Merzbower Merzbower) Simon Reynolds (Islees Rest) Tom Ridge (And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead Madonna) Stephen Robinson (Fushususha / Sow It That Which Before / Could Only Sense) Peter Seaprop (Anti-Pop Consortium Tragic Epilogue) Philip Sherburne (Luxmo Vokality) Dave Tompkins (Ghosface Kilian Supreme Clientele) David Toop (Osama Yoshida Catho) Dan Warburton (Red Fell) Ben Watson (Kinny Process Team 1994-97) Rob Young (Anti-Pop Consortium Tragic Epilogue)

Reissues A-Z

Dr Alimantado Best Dressed Chicken In Town (Keyman)
Art Ensemble Of Chicago Les Stances À Sophie (Soul Jazz)
Big Youth Natty Cultural Dread 1973-76 (Blood & Fire)
Peter Brötzmann Sextet/Octet Nipples (Atavistic Unheard Music)
Burning Spear Marcus Garvey/Garvey's Ghost (Simply Vinyl)
The Buzzcocks Spiral Scratch (Mute)
John Cage & Kenneth Patchen The City Wears A Slouch Hat (Organ Of Corti)
Cantiapelo September Energy (BCO)
The Congos Heart Of The Congos (Blood & Fire/Simply Vinyl)
Cornelius Cardew/The Scratch Orchestra The Great Learning (Organ Of Corti)
Ornette Coleman Complete Science Fiction Sessions (Sony)
John Coltrane Ascension (Impulse!)
Creation Rebel Starship Africa (On-U Sound)
ISKA 1903 Chapter One 1970-72 (Emanem)
ESK A South Bronx Story (Soul Jazz)
The Wörm The Wörm Years 1970-73 (ReR)
Richard Hell & The Voidoids Blank Generation (Sire)
Pierre Henry Mix 01.0 (Philips)
Henry Cow In Praise Of Learning (ReR)
Sonny Hops The Mighty Burner (Pitts Archives)
Iskra 1903 Chapter One 1970-72 (Emanem)
Kenny Process Team 1994-97 (Bingo)
King Tubby Essential Dub (Hiro)
KMD Black Bastards (Readyrock)
Ennio Morricone/Gruppo Di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza Gli Occhi Freddi Della Paura OST (Dago Red)
Jackie Mittoo Mackin Fat (Studio One)
Conlon Nanarrow Studies For Player Piano (Wergo)
Augustus Pablo E Rockers (Pressure Sounds)
Ray Russell Live At The ICA Retrospective (Moikoi)
Sonny Sharrock Solo Master (Vortex)
Smith & Mighty Bass Is Maternal (Studio K7)
The Stooges Complete Fun House Sessions (Rhino Handmade)
Suicide Half Alive (ROIR)
Sun Ra & His Myth Science Orchestra When Angels Speak Of Love (Evidence)
Sun Ra Languidity (Evidence)
Various Dancehall 101 (VP)
Various Ethiopian Urban And Tribal Music Vol 1 (Rounder)
Various Sacred Flute Music From New Guinea Vol 1 (Rounder)
Edward Vesala Rodina (Love)
Sylvor Walker & Welton Irie Lambs Bread international (Blood & Fire)
John Zorn The Big Gundown Complete Edition (Tzadik)



Tangents #4: The rise of Smiley culture in Nixon's USA was irresistible. But don't let the glad expression give you the wrong impression: from Motown's Norman Whitfield and Philly soul's O'Jays to the West Coast's Sly And The Family Stone, black artists flipped Smiley over to reveal the underside of the American dream. Words: Peter Shapiro. Illustration: Joseph Kral

smiling faces sometimes

In December 1963, at the beginning of a long New England winter, graphic artist Harvey Ball was commissioned by the State Mutual insurance company of Worcester, Massachusetts to design a feelgood campaign to boost morale amongst the workers. What Ball came up with was two dots above an inverted arc on a vivid yellow, beaming sun background. The company initially printed up 100 badges, but they proved so popular that Worcester was soon overrun with these caricatures of vacant cheerfulness. Ball's fee for designing what is probably, aside from the cross and the swastika, the world's most iconic symbol: \$45 (even adjusted for inflation, that ain't much more than a couple of hundred dollars).

However, despite the local success of Ball's smiling face and its subsequent use in numerous advertising campaigns across the US, Smiley was truly born seven years later, a few hundred miles away in Philadelphia. In September 1970, two brothers, Bernard and Murray Sparr, were looking for a way to make a quick buck. With America entrenched in the Vietnam War and riven by protest, generational conflict and racial unrest, Bernard stumbled upon the image that summed up America's Nixonite reaction to the 60s in some old ad campaign. Bernard put the Smiley on a badge and Murray came up with the slogan "Have A Happy Day", which soon mutated into "Have A Nice Day." Echoing such mantras of bland optimism as "turn that frown upside down" and "a day without a smile is like a day without sunshine", the "Have A Nice Day" campaign swept a country that was desperately trying to put the 60s behind it and was looking more and more like The

Streptococcus Wives, *Logan's Run* and *Down Of The Deal* every day. The Sparr brothers hooked up with New York button manufacturer NG Slater, and the Smiley face became the fad to end all fads, replicating the Worcester craze but on a national level. By 1972, some 50 million Smiley badges had been produced, not to mention all the other paraphernalia the image appeared on.

But as Smiley was zombieifying the country, narcotising it with an empty, blissful grin, a group of musicians recognised the symbol as the pernicious little yellow devil that it was. After centuries of betrayals and lies, the smile, handshake and put on the back are no longer ways of sealing a social contract. Instead, they become things to fear, temporary placations mollifying rage and resentment until the inevitable u-turn, retraction and cutback comes. For African-Americans in the early 70s, the *Cheshire Cat* grin was all that was left of the promises of the 60s — the substance of which had long since vanished into thin air, gone up in smoke like the ghettos of Watts, Detroit and Pittsburgh.

Instead of turning their frowns upside down and grinning and bearing it, soul artists of the early 70s engaged in a remarkable conversation centred around the "smiling faces" trope, an majestic minefield that played confidence games with centuries of caricatures, the beaming faces of the white liberal establishment promising civil rights and integration, Nixon's Dirty Tricks gang and, yes, Smiley himself. Invariably, these smiling faces told lies, but rather than being simple protest shorthand for the duplicitousness of the day oppressor that worked in a similar way to other pop music tropes

— like say, stoner/doom rock's "Witchfinder General" trope (derived from the great Vincent Price flick of the same name, also called *The Conqueror Worm*, for any Yanks reading) which attacks the hypocrisy of squares and Moral Majority types — it is infinitely more complex and confusing, filled with self-loathing, and hectors at any number of targets. Whether the central theme of the song or merely a seemingly thrown away line, the trope of "smiling faces" was universally wrapped up in some of the tonest music ever made in the stunning succession of soul records that used it, creating the ultimate expression of paranoia and elevating the answer song tradition above the level of kitsch.

Motown producer extraordinaire Norman Whitfield (when is someone going to recognise this guy's true genius?) was perhaps the first to see Smiley as the lobotomised, jaundiced, signylin' so and so that he really was. In 1968 he pretty much defined the strain of paranoid soul that dominated black radio in the late 60s and early 70s with Marvin Gaye's version of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine". He redefined this sub-genre, though, when he wrote "Smiling Faces Sometimes" in the late 1970 with his regular songwriting partner Barnett Strong. "Smiling Faces Sometimes" first appeared on *Wax* as a 12 minute mini-epic on The Temptations' Sky's *The Limit* album, which was released in April 1971. However, it was first recorded by a vocal trio that Whitfield formed almost as a sketchbook for his studio experimentation. When their (much better) version was finally released as a single in July 1971, The Undisputed Truth (Joe Harris, Billy Rae

Calvin and Brenda Joyce Evans) had their first and only US Top Ten hit with their first record. Despite the uncompromising lyrics, the debut's chart success was no surprise, with massed chorales, percussion that imitates both a ticking clock and a rattlesnake, swooping strings, the refrains of "Can you dig it?" that Isaac Hayes would borrow for "Theme From Shaft" and palpitantly gargantuan brass and woodwind sections. "Smiling Faces Sometimes" was the most fully realized orchestral soul production up to that point.

However, this was no Hugo & Lugs, Easy Listening, crossover appeal for Sam Cooke or The Stylistics. The first four seconds let you know all you needed to figure out what was to come: "Smiling Faces Sometimes" begins with a horn fanfare from some hyperspace where Vegas, Bob & Earl and Charlton Heston biblical epics conjoin, only to be compounded by a heroic wah-wah echo that bounces around the soundfield like a Rabelian Recorder Rabbit. In the third second the scything strings that would become claustrophobia's other signature slice the production in half, leaving a dangling guitar lick and doomy, insistent maracas. Lush arrangements straight off Isaac Hayes's *Hot Buttered Soul* follow, but the instrumental richness is denser, thicker, more claustrophobic — the sweetening becoming ever more cloying and fulsome, like false praise. When lead singer Joe Harris comes in, he sings like a mourning Leon Stutts; you can hear his power held in reserve as if he is subduing his heaving tone because he has resigned himself to the fatalism the song describes.



Hint your backs: The O'Jays on *Soul Train*

And what a brutal vision the song relates. "Smiling faces sometimes pretend to be your friend/Smiling faces show no traces of the evil that lurks within/Smiling faces, smiling faces sometimes they don't tell the truth/Smiling faces tell lies and I've got proof. Beware of the handshake that hides a snake/Beware of the pat on the back/It just might hold you back." On the surface it seems a pretty clear indictment of the white establishment who failed to deliver civil rights while promising the world. In a song written by Al Bell, the

Staple Singers saw things pretty much the same way. 1972's "I'll Take You There" contained the refrain "I know a place/An't nobody crying/An't nobody worried/An't no smiling faces/lying to the races." Rarely had a popular African-American record ("I'll Take You There" was number one on the R&B chart for the entire month of May as well as being a pop number one) been so direct about its protest.

However, "I'll Take You There" — along with War's "Get Down" from 1971's *All Day Music* ("Police and their justice laughing while they bust us") — was the least ambiguous of all the records that used the "smiling faces" trope, perhaps because Al Bell was a minister who had become the president of Stax Records and there was no room for equivocation in his vision of paradise. But that line about the handshake in "Smiling Faces Sometimes" — which has resonances with the Black Power movement and its numerous soul handshakes and hand signs — seems to indicate that it's not only Whitey who'll cheerfully rob you blind. It wasn't alone.



Cer's argue with that: The Undisputed Truth

On the amazing "Don't Call Me Brother" from The O'Jays' 1973 album *Ship Ahoy*, lead singer Eddie Levert breaks into a sermon: "Just the other day, when I was hanging out down on the main drag/I went in to get me a small, teeny weeny toddy for the evening/And when I come out, I got a bad case of the blues when I saw my tyres gone! open up the door and there was my glove compartment all torn out from the dashboard/And here you come, here you come, skinnin' and ginnin', skinnin' and ginnin./Here you come, I know you did it, with the power sign/Takin' about, 'My man, said on that, my brother/I said I don't like it, how can you really, really mean it?'/I know about ya, I know what you're really good for."

Following the even more incredible "Black Stabbers" (more on which later), "Don't Call Me Brother" was produced by Philadelphia International's Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, who were the main instigators of a



Shiny happy people:
The Temptations

whole series of records from that city that seemed to interrogate traditional roles of black masculinity (see also former associate Thom Bell's productions of the helium harmonies of The Delfonics and The Stylistics who took falsetto into the realm of the castrati). Before Levert's sermon, The O'Jays take that enduring symbol of black male camaraderie: the street corner doo-wop group, and turn it into a savage indictment of black masculinity. Over some of the ripest music of Gamble & Huff's opulent career (but just as in "Smiling Faces Sometimes", the uncouth vibes and zinging strings reinforced the song's message), The O'Jays ask some *ne'er-do-wells*, "How can you call me brother when you don't respect my woman? How can you call me brother when I can't even trust you behind my back?" But, it's that sermon and its "banned and ginned" line "power sign" detail and even that bit about "a small teeny wrenny today" that gave the song its force. Given that Kerry Gamble was a Black Muslim, it seems strange that the character we're meant to identify with is

drinking and criticizing at least the trappings, if not the substance, of the movement. Was this Gamble questioning his faith? Or was the sermon improvised by Levert who was taking a camouflaged potshot at his boss? Or were the details simply coincidence?

Given the swirling paranoia of "Back Stabbers", it's hard to imagine that they were merely coincidence. Beginning with what must surely be the greatest intro of any pop song save maybe "Johnny B Goode", "Back Stabbers" is the tale of a man whose friends want to steal his woman. The first song written by the duo of Gene McFadden and John Whitehead (with input from Leon Huff) who would later find fame with "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now", "Back Stabbers" probably is just that: the story of a guy whose relationship is going south trying to fend off the opportunists and scavengers putting the final nail in the coffin. But those rolling piano chords that introduce the record create a drama too big to be contained by the merely personal. The heavenly strings that gradually fade in the mix, trying

desperately to get the upper hand on the relentless, insistent beat only to be undone by the punchiest horns in the Philly lexicon, turn "Back Stabbers" into a huge Shakespearean saga.

"What they don't they smile in your face/All the time they want to take your place/The back stabbers" While the music speaks volumes, to really hear "Back Stabbers" as the crucial part of the smiling faces conversation, you need to listen to it as part of the album with same title. *Back Stabbers* begins with an almost mocking James Brown horn riff before modulating into a hard funk groove called "When The World's At Peace" that borrows heavily from Sly Stone in both musical and lyrical tone. The first verse goes, "I can see the day when it's safe to walk the streets/When we'll learn to care for those lost in poverty/There'll be no need for our sons and daughters to march up and down the streets singing 'We Shall Overcome'"; and its old rights-reference places "Back Stabbers" in context. The next line is "When the world's at peace we'll still be in



Back to back with it! The Four Tops

one piece?" and the song soon slows down to a disoriented crawl.

"Back Stabbers" emerges from this percussion fog. It reached number one on the American R&B chart on 9 September 1972, six days before E Howard Hunt, G Gordon Liddy, James McCord, Frank Sturgis, Bernard Barker, Virgilio Gonzalez and Eugenio Martinez were indicted for their role in the Watergate break-in. Released at a time when the full scale of Nixon's treachery was just beginning to be revealed at a time when The O'Jays and Gamble & Huff still believed that people needed to sing "We Shall Overcome," at a time when liberal Senator Daniel Moynihan was blaming the cycle of poverty on African-American men, "Back Stabbers" resonated with a significance that went far beyond the tale of a man whose friends want to steal his woman. Coupled with the eerie piano, screeching strings and off-kilter percussion, the air of spooks, dirty tricks and double-crossing is unmistakable.

One year later, as John Shaft was doing his thing in Africa, former Motown cogs The Four Tops were wailing, "There's not a street that you can walk/You gotta watch just who you're talking to/They're out to get ya/Can't turn your back on a smiling face/Next thing you know, there ain't no trace of you. Gotta keep your eye on the passers by, better watch your step/Cause you never know where the knife will go and they ain't missed yet." Produced by Chicago soul stalwart Johnny Pate for the Shaft in Africa soundtrack, "Are You Man Enough" was largely pro forma blackplattation, surging

Hollywood strings, gratuitous wah-wah, handclaps and a wonderfully cinematic intro.

For the most part, the lyrics are pretty pro forma as well. Except for two remarkable passages that add more layers of meaning to the conversation, where the above lines merely reiterate the terms of the debate. If "Back Stabbers" was all suggestive metaphors and uncanny timing, "Are You Man Enough" was unquestionable intention: "There's no pretending it goes away, with every step that you take you're paying your dues/And I ain't lying/You got to struggle to see the light because someone's looking to steal your right to choose/And they don't stop trying."

If Nixon was the perfect symbol of the changing game of Afro-America (his a 30 year old song ever been more appropriate?), then "Someone needs a friend just around the bend/Don't you think you should be there?/Are you man enough when the gang's roughs it in your heart to care?" is a plea for new paradigms, echoing the critique implied by The O'Jays and forcefully stated by The Temptations and Norman Whitfield on "Papa Was A Rolling Stone."

Long before Harvey Ball ever dreamed up his little yellow man, America was full of even more pernicious smiling caricatures. The pickaninny was a depiction of a black child with nappy hair, bulging eyes, enormous lips, a wide mouth usually being stuffed with watermelon and, almost invariably, a huge, stupid grin. Most scholars date the origin of the pickaninny to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Topsy character from Uncle

Tom's Cabin, but Topsy was a solemn girl meant to symbolise the brutality of slavery. The caricatures, both literary and figurative, that followed, however, universally depicted "good-for-nothing gator bait" pickaninies as misanthropic and more than happy with their lot. The pickaninny was a fixture in American popular culture until very recently, with such notable examples as Little Black Sambo, Buckraheat from the Our Gang films and numerous minstrelsy characters. In 1932 Cab Calloway recorded a version of the old minstrelsy number, "There's A Cabin In The Cotton" ("I got a feeling so sentimental/And I see a smile so gentle/When I think of old Virginia/And my pickaninny days").

Almost 40 years later, Sly Stone was slightly less sentimental when he sang, "You caught me smilin' again" on his 1971 album *There's A Riot Goin' On*. Sly & The Family Stone's early music was probably the greatest music of the 60s because it actually practised what it preached. A mixture of rock and soul, pop and funk, whites and blacks, men and women, Sly & The Family Stone represented the words of the 60s dream made flesh. While the rock community paid lip service to tolerance and loving each other (probably only because they thought they could up their groupie quotient), The Family Stone were living it. The protest singers filled their songs with a self-righteousness that made their world a drag to live in, but The Family Stone made a joyful noise out of collectivity.

By the end of 1969, though, Sly & The Family Stone was no longer the voice of a shiny, happy, new, integrated America. 1970's "Thank You (I Felt Some Be Mice Elf Again)" was a startling record that intimated that Woodstock, and the group's triumph there, was a sham ("Thank you for the party, but I could never stay"). The group's new album was endlessly delayed. Sly wasn't showing up for concerts, he was wrestling with drug addiction, there were rumours that black nationalist leaders were trying to force him to make his music more radical, he was getting death threats. When *There's A Riot Goin' On* finally emerged in November 1971, the joy, the gorgeous mosaic of voices and the "different strokes for different folks" tolerance were all gone. In their places, were scorn, despond and dead spots so vast you felt like you'd just fallen off the end of the world. The dearest spot of all was the title track, which clocked in at 0:00. While Marvin Gaye was making *What's Going On* as an article of faith in the power of pop music, Sly was highlighting his pessimism by sardonically pointing out that that nothing was going on.

With Sly turning to cataloguing the betrayals of the 60s dream, America needed a new black con to make it feel good about itself. Instead of someone who still believed in the possibilities of the American experiment, this new icon was an 11 year old boy who didn't know any better. While Michael Jackson was electrifying the world with his innocent charm, Sly was retracting into himself because he knew a lot better. "You Caught Me Smilin'" was a sketchy, slo-mo groove with deconstructed and incomplete JB horn charts, too wasted to try to fight their way through the narcotic haze — like Sly & The Family

Stone in dub, or maybe in photo-negative. Sly gurgled and wailed like a hungry baby, and sang like he was talking to his chest, railing like an incoherent drunk against the prevailing notion that ignorance is bliss. The song was a kiss-off — both to a lover and to his old constituency who didn't want him to stop smiling, he had been dragged through the ringer and he was going to take you with him.

The protagonist of The Persuaders' 1971 hit, "Thin Line Between Love And Hate", had also been left for dead. With Douglas "Smokie" Scott's overenunciated lead vocals and the old-fashioned melodrama of the arrangement, "Thin Line Between Love And Hate" is a pretty standard cautionary tale. Until the last verse, where the put-upon wife exacts her revenge and sends the cheating bastard to the hospital. As the record fades out, Scott gets on his knees and belts, "Every smiling face in a happy world... I like he's got old-time religion. Unlike Willie Hutch's 1974 "Theme From Foxy Brown" which contrasts Foxy's smiles and "foxy looks" to portray a sex bomb who's not to be trifled with, it's not too much of a leap to suggest that "Thin Line Between Love And Hate" can also be seen as a warning of what lurks behind the goofy grin of the lazy, snottiest coon!

The summer of '75 Nixon had been pardoned, stagflation had set in, the leaders of the Black Power movement had been rounded up, exiled or had retreated into academia, Van McCoy's "The Hustle" was heralding the disco era. However, replacing "The Hustle" at the top of the R&B charts was the last gasp for overtly political black music until The Funky Five's "The Message". "Fight The Power" was The Isley Brothers' second biggest hit, and, of course, everyone remembers it for the "all this bullshit gon' down" line. If the record company had their way, however, it would only have been heard in a bowdlerised version. Yet, even if the DJs didn't ignore the biz's advice, the chorus made the point just as forcefully, so forcefully in fact that Public Enemy would borrow elements from it more than a decade later. "Time is truly wasting/There's no guarantee/Smiles in the making/Fight the powers that be".

The Isleys may have closed the smiling faces chapter of soul, but Smiley himself inevitably continued to haunt popular culture like Casper the Friendly Ghost. Watchmen, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' savage critique of the 80s and the cartoonish leadership of Reagan and Thatcher, extensively used the image of Smiley. During Britain's Acid House boom of the late 80s, Smiley was first spotted at the Shoom club, and was popularised by a dragner called Barnsley who made it all the rage once again for a year or so. But Aced wasn't really about disguising pain behind the camouflage of a smile. "Gurning in their place/All they want to do is get off their face" doesn't really out it as a metaphor. Last year, though, Anti-Pop Consortium brought a Ho-Hop perspective to the smiling faces trope. With Ho-Hop inverting the soul paradigm, Anti-Pop's "motto is show no teeth". Never let 'em see you smile, never say, "Have a nice day".

Caught smiling: Sly Stone



invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...



Mark E Smith

Tested by Edwin Pouncey. Photos: Hamish Brown

Mark (Edward) Smith is the mastermind behind The Fall, the group which he formed in his home town of Manchester in the late '70s after quitting his job as a shopping clerk. Since then he has nurtured and steered the various musicians and performers he has come into contact with over the years through nearly 35 albums and 27 different line-ups. The latest Fall album (released on new label Eagle Rock) is called *The Unutterable*, a title which may refer to Smith's fascination with the work of American Gothic horror writer HP Lovecraft. But trying to pinpoint exactly what goes on in Smith's head is a dubious task that inevitably throws up more questions than answers. The music on *The Unutterable* — featuring keyboard player Julia Nagle, guitarist Neville Wilding, bass player Adam Hala and drummer Tom Head, together with a guest appearance from Kazuo Hoki of The Frank Chickens — is a giddy mix of futuristic Techno crush, razored rockability and punk rock machine head meltdown, all superglued together with Smith's domineering nasal snarl.

Prior to *The Unutterable*, the group released *The Marshall Suite* on Artful Records, together with a solo spoken word album from Smith titled *The Post-Nearly Man*. This last project prompted him to give a public reading of his poetry and lyrics in London, eliciting a response that, according to him, was favourable and fulfilling.

Although he prefers to live in the familiar territory of Manchester, he avoids acknowledging that his deas as a writer and a musician belong to any particular place other than Planet Mark. "I don't know, because I'm neither British or American," he replies when probed for his thoughts on what makes UK rock musicians different from their US counterparts. "I'm not anything." The Jukebox took one stormy December evening in Prestwich, Manchester.

THE SPIDERS

"Johnny B Goode" from Let's Go Spiders (Big Beat) 1996

It's obvious what the song is, but can you tell the nationality of the group?

[After listening intently for several minutes.] Japanese. You can tell by the pitch.

You're right! How does the pitch reveal where they originate?

It's not French, because the French play rock in roll in a different style. They play it really over the top. The Japanese get it pretty much on the ball. That's a bit of a good one actually.

It's by a 60s group called The Spiders. Do you like the way the Japanese embrace rock 'n' roll and make it their own thing?

I like some of those attacking groups, a lot of the ones who did that Speed Metal which was like a minute and a half long. I can't remember their names but they're really good. I'm a big Domo [Suzuki, former Can vocalist] fan as well.

Do you listen to his new stuff?

When he sends it to me.

CURRENT NINETY THREE

"Faust" from Faust (Durtro) 2000

[Mutts pass.] No idea.

It's music from Current Ninety Three that was inspired by a previously unpublished supernatural story by decadent writer Eric, Count Stenbock.

It sounds sort of like cheap film music. I don't think you can put those kind of stories on to film. It's all in the imagination.

Your Past Nearly Non spoken word CD opens with "The Horror In Clay", which is based on the first section of HP Lovecraft's cosmic horror story The Call of Cthulhu. Can you tell me about that?

I changed it a bit so it was set in Penzance, which is where I wrote it. It was when the Teletubbies came out actually, so the fellow who is reading it out was like a bloke who goes mountain climbing and this sun comes up with a big evil Teletubbies baby on its face. It was like *Glastonbury* gone wrong really. I tried to zip it up a bit. Few people understood it because there's no beginning and no end to it.

[Dramatically] "The Horror In Clay" it is good, isn't it? I'm glad somebody else likes it. You're the only one! And a couple of Portuguese people [laughs].

Do you keep returning to Lovecraft?

Yeah, very much. I still read him. I went round to Providence [Rhode Island] where he lived when I was in America and you can see it all. I thought, "Bloody hell, there's enough material there to last you a lifetime."

Do you like this?

It's OK, yeah. I had a tape like that called *Purgatory* by the group called *Evil* and it was the most frightening thing you've ever heard in your life. I think they were American or something. I taped over it because it was doing my head in. It was like that in a way, it was terrifying.

PRINCE JAZZBO

"Every Migma Is A Winner" from Mr Funny (Pressure Sounds) 1972

[Turns volume up.] It's like slow Big Youth. Same lyrics. It's Prince Jazzbo.

Aw, it wasn't me? We were only talking about him today [calls partner in to listen]. We were talking about this LP called *Prince Jazzbo Vs I Roy (Step Forward Youth)* [Sings] "I Roy you a boy, you imitate the great U Roy" [much laughter]. Great lyric. Is that new?

It's a new compilation, yes.

He has no shame. Prince Jazzbo, he just tips off everybody. On the other side of this LP it's got I Roy going [sings], "Prince Jazzbo don't bother me, you don't have an idea in your head, you taped everybody, soon you will be dead" [laughs]. It's fucking great.

That DJ battle sparked off a rash of versions.

Yeah, I know. I've got them all [looks at cover]. Can I grab that one? Roots reggae was huge when The Fall first started.

Were you always a fan?

Well, I liked dub music. Augustus Pablo. It was the only thing around worth listening to for a while wasn't it?



MERZBOW

"Decomposition 002.1.1" from Unlabeled Ten (Extreme) 1997

There's a school of music like that in Manchester, where they play records with needles made out of wood.

It's Japanese noise. It's by Masami Akita, better known as Merzbow.

It doesn't go far enough for me. It's a bit like a Can outtake without the drums, or Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*.

It's very like Metal Machine Music. Do you like that album?

Metal Machine Music just clears your head out. I like that, it's my favourite. It's the best thing Lou Reed ever did. It was when he went bionkers, wasn't it? I had gone right off him by then. I was a big fan at one time, but after *Transformer* I lost interest in what he was doing. Then he brought *Metal Machine Music* out and I thought it was just brilliant.

Did you buy it when it first came out in 1975?

Yeah. I was buying it when everybody else was taking it back [laughs]. People were wanting their money back.

Did you hear Ecstasy, his last record?

I'd like to hear it. The reviews he got for that last record were terrible and so I quite fancy listening to it.

You must hear "Like A Possessive", this long electric guitar rant which is the best track on it.

Yeah. I read about that and it sounded good to me then. I think I may definitely gonna buy it.

CHRIS MORRIS

"4FTCAR" from Blue Jew (Warp) 2000

[Glances at CD player.] What's this?

It's from *Blue Jew*, by comedian Chris Morris with music by Propellerheads. It was first broadcast on BBC radio. I don't agree with that at all. I think it's fucking crap.

Comedians and actors all want to make records, as if they haven't got enough fucking musicians who want to make fucking records. You made a record didn't you?

Yes.

Well you shouldn't have done, should you?

Why?

Because I said No, I'm only kidding you. The whole thing about making music now is that it's very easy. So you've got the prime minister of this country who wants to be in a rock band. You've got a chancellor of the exchequer who wants to be a pop star. Bill Clinton wants to be a rock musician, they don't know what they're fucking talking about. I mean, Jack of all trades and master of none. I'm a singer/songwriter and that's fucking it, otherwise your quality goes down.

FAUST

"It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl" from So For: The Wunne Years 1970-73 (Recommended) 1972

Many more to go now, Edwin? Are they all like this? Is Can?

Close. It's Faust.

Oh right, right. Really? Is it new stuff?



No, old stuff. It's from *So Far*, their second album.

I prefer *Four Tops* or the first one to this.

Are there any other Krautrock groups you appreciate apart from Can and Faust?

I really liked both versions of Amon Düül II when I first heard them. Especially Amon Düül I, I thought they were very inventive.



EMINEM

"Kill You" from *The Marshall Mathers LP* (Interscope) 2000

Any thoughts?

Is that Eminem? It sounds very angry to me. I've heard rap stuff where the

production has been much better and thicker, where it's really sub. Where you can switch off from the lyrics, like This is like pop rap, white soul. Those rap artists, even though they ramble on about killing people most of the time, some of the levels they've got are really brilliant. Even Snoop Doggy Dogg, his lyrics are boring, but the music is really good. It's like a Stevie Wonder production or something, it's rich. This is Torika toy rap compared to that.

He's popular and controversial...

It's probably because he's white. It's like Ai G or something [laughs]. There's some good black stuff like this, though.

Tell me some.

You never know their names, do you, but the radio stations in Manchester play some really good stuff. In a way this is like NWA, isn't it? When a lot of that early stuff came out it was also trinity and weak sounding, but now it's developed a lot where it's like really slow and rich. It's lovely to listen to. Now it's got a different look to it.

Didn't you go and see Eminem perform live recently?

I was supposed to. A couple of the members of [The Fall] have got computers so they tell everybody on the Internet what they're going to see, and because it's The Fall a lot of it goes out under my looking name. That's the trouble with the Internet: it's a Tower of Babel. Doesn't he remind you of The Monkees, though?

Who, Eminem?

At the time you'd have The Rolling Stones, Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker, and then The Monkees were the nice but weren't they?

You think Eminem is nice? He's currently in prison for pistol whipping some guy.

[Smirks derisively] Pistol whipping some guy? 'Cause you know that sort of publicity is worth a quarter of a million dollars, that's what they said to me in America. You stay in jail in America and it's worth that amount in PR. Do you get my drift?

Didn't you spend some time in a New York jail once during a recent US tour?

It was while Puff Daddy was in there. He was supposed to have shot some people or something. The trouble was that his real name was Smith [sic — his name is Combs] and I was in the same jail. I was only meant to

be in for a night, but they kept stopping my bail because they got my forms mixed up, that was just my fucking luck. He was sending in impostors dressed as me. It was quite funny actually, because they [the NYPD] don't notice, to them they all look the same. I got out of it though. I wouldn't like to be him, he was looking at seven years.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

"A Trainwreck in Hell" from *At Terror Street And Agony Way* (King Mob) 1969

Is it Hunter S. Thompson?

Close.

Brief Eason Ellis? Tom Wolfe? Who's it?

Supposedly, one of the tracks on your new record ["Dr Buck's Letter"] is about him.

Bukowski.

Do you like his writing?

I like it very much. He sounds sprightly here, doesn't he?

It was recorded in the 60s by [Barry] Miles. I picked this track because it has a real rhythm to it.

He sounds really good here. The ones I've got he sounds pessed out of his head all of the time. If you go for a walk on the other side of LA, this is what it's like. The LA streets used to interest me. I used to split off from the [ex-] mosus [Brix Smith] when I stayed there and go see people like Kid Congo [Powers] on the other side of town. He and him used to tear the place apart. There's the arty side of LA, there's the film section of LA, and then there's this section that makes Salford look sophisticated. They'd be living in these flats where the big old Hollywood stars used to live, only now they were wrecked. There are all these people there that don't want to conform. Claude [Bessy — a punk rock journalist Kickspace] was like that. Good people.

What do you like about Bukowski?

I can't read him but I can hear him. He only got tapes that my mates gave me. Kid gave me some tapes of when he was reading at a university. He'd be on stage with a fridge full of beer, which is really revolutionary. You play gigs in California, even in the hippy places, you can't have beer on stage. Yet he had a fridge full. You'd hear him deliberately open the can in front of his audience, drink the beer down and go. Blam! They had to put up with it because it was all part of his act.

Do you think Bukowski's audience are drawn to him because of what he wrote or what he sounds like?

It's the delivery, isn't it? I liked Burroughs a lot more when I saw him live in Manchester. I always liked Burroughs, but when I saw him live I thought he was knockout. He delivers it like a Southern sheriff. You could listen to him all night, just the way he was saying it. You read The Naked Lunch and it's good stuff. You hear him reading it out loud, with all the pauses, and it sounds like a press conference or some presidential address. It was surreal, yet it made his writing make a lot more sense. The old school of writers were like that, too. Bram Stoker and Charles Dickens used to read out their novels to an audience. Didn't they? To see how they worked before they published them. It would have been great to hear them read it out.

IGGY POP

"Shakin' All Over" from *Avenue B* (Virgin) 1999

[Taps empty lager can with pen to the beat] "Shakin' All Over." It's a fucking sacrilege, whoever it is. Who is it?

Iggy Pop.

Really? When did he do this?

It's from his *Avenue B* album which came out last year.

He can't get [the sound of] Mick Green [from Johnny Kidd And The Pirates] on the guitar. Mick Green did it [much better] on the original. Sacrilege.

Were you an Iggy fan?

Yeah. I still am. I'm surprised that it's him. It's a very British song, that. I once did a cover of "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and I got a note from Iggy saying that he thought it was a great version.

What do you think is the great divide which separates

British rock 'n' roll from American rock 'n' roll?

It's like people who see [and hear] Cliff Richard as a British Elvis Presley. There's a big difference, but a lot of people don't seem to see it. To me there's a big fucking difference between Elvis and Cliff Richard.

You recently played in London with 60s American surf rock legend Dick Dale. How did that go down?

It was all right [laughs]. All you heard all night was Dick Dale. He was on before us and we couldn't get away from him. Everywhere you went back stage at the QEH it was Dick Dale this, Dick Dale that. We went to the hotel and all his people were there. You turned on the radio and it was talking about Dick Dale. Everywhere you went he was there. According to Dick Dale he invented Link Wray, The Beach Boys, psychedelic Frank Zappa music, Elvis Costello. Dick Dale invented every sort of music, according to him.

Did you meet Dick Dale?

[Laughs] I didn't want to meet him. We were all trying to avoid him. He was Dick Dale!

APHASIC & DJ SCUD

"Now World" from *Mash The Place Up* (Ambush) 1998

What do you think of this?

It sounds like The Fall backwards actually.

Was this kind of music the influence behind "Cyber Insects" and "Dr Buck's Letter" on the new album?

You've got to go to encourage the musicians until they get it right, until it's in sync.

Where did the germ of the idea originate, though?

I'm not going to tell you because it's a secret. I don't need to listen to stuff a lot of the time, I just need to work.

Do you purposefully block out influences, then?

You've got to. The group turn up with tunes and then you change them. You say "That's not right, you've got to do it this way. It's a good tune, but you've got to do it in this swing."

Yet despite your influence blocking each Fall record manages to sound in tune with the times. How is that?

You hit it sometimes. But you get no thanks for it.

So Mark, out of all these records, which do you like best?

The Prince Jazzbo one was the best. I just got fed up with it [laughs].

sound check

In custody: January's selected albums and 12"s

• Artistic 40th Anniversary Collection

- **Koji Asano**
- **Michael Bisio & Eyvind Kang**
- **Chadbourne/Dresser/Ibarra/Morris**
- **Eugene Chadbourne & Paul Lovens**
- **Shirley Collins**
- **Czawoz Klezmer Band**
- **Charles Curtis**
- **Ernest Dawkins's New Horizons Ensemble**
- **Christopher Delaurenti**
- **Dörner/Lonberg-Holm/Zerang**
- **Jeremy Dower**
- **Dr Who: Music From The Tenth Planet**
- **Harcel Duchamp**
- **Sihel Endersen**
- **Faust**
- **Gratkowski/Graew/Lovens**
- **Full Metal Klezmer**
- **Morton Feldman**
- **Jimi Fox**
- **Future Pilot AKA**
- **Los Morrison**
- **Matthew Herbert**
- **Ake Modell**
- **Ryōji Neda**
- **Akemi Ishigima**
- **Italian Instabile Orchestra**
- **Joseph Holbrooke**
- **Greg Kelley**
- **Aurion Kieve**
- **Petr Konik**
- **Krausz/Schiffels/Holoo**
- **Lesser**
- **Christian Marclay & Otomo Yoshhide**
- **Mass Producers & Caroline Kraabel**
- **Microstoria**
- **Moodymine**
- **Mount Vernon Arts Lab**
- **Oscar Noriega's Play Party**
- **The Orb**
- **Otomo Yoshhide & Voice Crack**
- **Puff (Phillip, Uther & Turner)**
- **Scannerfunk**
- **Matthew Ship's New Orbit**
- **Chris Speed**
- **Mark Springer**
- **Karlheinz Stockhausen**
- **Taku Sugimoto & Günter Müller**
- **Annette Krebs/Kevin Drumm**
- **Ulan Bator**
- **Guang Yu**
- **Judith Weir**
- **White Out with Jim O'Rourke**

Plus new compilations, reissues, avant rock, classical, critical beats, electronic, hip-hop, jazz and other limits releases in brief

Koji Asano The Last Slide Of Evening Falls MUSICALS/WHITING 19 442

New incursions from the prolific studio of Koji Asano in Barcelona inevitably arrive without the usual reviewer's crutches. Press releases give away little but the title and label address the CDs themselves provide the track times and a list of previous releases. These four latest works, in near identical packaging are no exception. Fortunately Asano's artwork provides the listener with some fruitful hints. Each of his 19 releases so far has highly distinctive photographic artwork featuring manmade traces in anonymous, strangely desolate urban landscapes. The depth of field is often blurred with foreground objects sharply differentiated from misty insubstantial backgrounds.

Asano looks for the rigidity of artificial patterns and forms, softened by the passage of time and the effects of rain, wind, rust. The images adorning this set of sleeves are consummate Asano: looking out through a rain-splattered window onto the street below raindrops running down the pane, the urban scene below blurred and indistinct. The muted grey colours suggest the approaching twilight of the title. What matters are the patterns made by the drops, random dots here and there forming lengthier streams.

Asano has extended the same methodology to more than four hours of music across these four discs. Each of his releases has focused on a distinct instrumental palette: ranging from subtle electronic sounds and new jazz tempo limpidly through string quartet compositions to the random electronic noise bursts of his recent *A Sixth Path Of Rain*. Here too the range is limited: this set of what sounds like a combination of electronics and/or electronically modified acoustic strings. The mood is at once quietly ominous and melancholic. The electronic sources are layered, constantly sliding back and forth between higher pitches reminiscent of Otomo Yoshhide's Flament and lower deeper drones. Individual sounds are sustained over long periods, decaying gradually as the ear attempts to follow their seemingly random courses downwards.

There's an appropriate evening austerity to the sound, like an artist rejecting any vibrant colours to work purely in shades of grey. As the mind slowly accustoms itself to the limited acoustic range, further details emerge. Each sound is not a constant, pure showcase, rather they have the drift, wavering tone of a badly played violin. The effect of these layered

sounds, each of them in constant motion, is subtle but unmistakable. As the brain searches for and fails to find the sure ground of musical structures and development, the unconscious takes over and thought flows free. If there are patterns here, they are precisely like those created by rain on glass, obeying no logic but that of random interaction. As individual tones overlap like water, gravity suddenly takes over and a maelstrom of stylophone buzz suddenly streaks down the soundfield.

It's a standing piece of work, daunting in its randomness, and monolithic in its sheer length. Given the right atmosphere, it's a sunfire scourge for the mind, and as major a statement as Asano has made so far.

ALAN CURPINGS

Michael Bisio & Eyvind Kang MBEX™ MUSICALS/HMSO 500 00

Dörner/Lonberg-Holm/ Zerang Ciaque MUSICALS/HMSO 500 00

Gratkowski/Graew/ Lovens Quicksand MUSICALS/HMSO 500 00

Greg Kelley Tumpet MUSICALS/HMSO 500 00

We contributor Jon Morgan's Meniscus, a small label operating out of Minneapolis, impresses not only by the consistent quality of its releases to date, it also evidences an expansive engagement with improvised musics. This current batch encompasses seasoned free jazz playing, electronic probings and much else besides.

Volant Eyvind Kang was a member of a quartet that recorded the album *Covert Choreography* under bassist Michael Bisio's leadership during the mid-90s. The duo format, allowing greater clarity of line and steadier focus, suits them well. On 'MBEX', both musicians demonstrate a considerably expanded range: from melodic elaboration of themes to scratchy stridulations, dry rattle and abstracted twirling.

Michael Zerang has drummed straight with Ken Vandermark, but the term 'multiple percussion' appropriately describes the resources he brings to Ciaque. The session

groups him with trumpeter Axel Dörner and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm. Those are vibrant and discernive voices, but their priority here is striving to achieve the closest possible proximity through shared textures, complementary phrasing and consensual dynamics. The result is collective improvisation of a high order, imaginatively adapting varied instrumental potential to the requirements of a tight group identity.

Quicksand was recorded live at Cologne's Stadtgarten early in 1999. Pianist Georg Graew and Frank Gratkowski, blowing alto sax, clarinet and bass clarinet, are longtime associates. Drummer Paul Lovens, completing the trio, is one of the pioneering hard men of European free improvising. Despite his ongoing attachment to the singing sax, he remains a no-frills musician, emphatic and efficient. This performance, jazz without formal obligations, loosely structured without meandering, bears stylistic echoes of Lovens's classic trio alliance with Alexander von Schlippenbach and Evan Parker, especially in terms of affinities between the pianists.

Greg Kelley plays with percussionist Tatsuya Nakamura and saxophonist Bob Raney in the group Nempenji. His entrancing *Tumpet*, recorded in Somerville, Massachusetts, resembles Raney's solo ventures in its uncompromising physicality. Not least, his tiny, full-volume, in another sense sound served up in tactile, pungent chunks. The instrument is anatomised, played and pinned out for close inspection: a fleshy outcrop of tubing and valves. The resonant chamber wheezes and exhales, splatters and exudes. Blows are magnified in growls and whistles. You can hear the spittle glisten.

JULIAN COWLEY

Eugene Chadbourne featuring Paul Lovens Young At Heart/Forgiven LTO CD 02051294 00

Chadbourne/Dresser/ Ibarra/Morris Pant Pan AVANT 440004 00

Eugene Chadbourne Praxmada Ka Poest SFO CD 0104 00

These three releases open a window onto the waxy of Eugene Chadbourne's working methods — disruptive Improv, collaborations of song, urbane bluegrass pacing and abstract

studies in extended technique. *Young At Heart* (Foghorn) is a double set predominantly containing songs recorded live in Switzerland and France with exemplary improvising drummer Paul Lovens, cramping and finking along. Chadbourne sings as MOR jazz standards as straight as he can, while the C&W material tends towards manic speed readings spilling over with excited elaborations. The songs emerge from rambling interludes and small sound improvisations, and constitute a comforting enough bar-room sprawl, but the Chadbourne originals — mainly solo and recorded at home — are the ones you want to return to. From "Improvements" — a swinging bluesgrass protest song about NATO's bombing of Serbia and Kosovo — to "Happy New Year" — a love song to his wife and daughters recorded on New Year's Day 2000, each one is a gem.

On Ron Pen Chadbourne is teamed up with an ad-hoc improvising quartet featuring Joe Pons (guitar), Mark Dresser (double bass) and Susie Ibarra (drums). With no consensus about where the music should go, the encounter's dialogical tensions are a source of intrigue that pushes the participants into fresh territory. Chadbourne upsets any tendency towards noodling with his scuzzy speedball bluesgrass. He can't help sounding satirical and playfully subversive. Ibarra is the most at home and fearless amidst the confusion, working closely with Dresser and responsively to Chadbourne.

With text and cover art invoking the realities of present day Romania, the three regularly abstract improved dubio steel guitar solos that comprise *Promote Co Pasa* are then on beauty and thrills on dirt. With Eugene obsessively grinding away at extraneous detail the pieces reflect the life of the opening 36 minute opus, "It Was Impossible To Take In A Vata Without Noticing A Pale Of Garbage Somewhere In The Field Of Vision".

PHIL INGLAND

Shirley Collins

The Power Of The True Love Knot
FLOPS UNO FLO 3008 CD

The Power Of The True Love Knot is a marvellous collection and a landmark release in English folk. Recorded in 1968, these traditional songs sound both of and outside their time. Shirley Collins and her sister Dolly came from a singing family in Sussex, where they were also exposed to Moriwend and Purvell. Shirley's customised dulcimer and Dolly's fluty portative organ are the main instrumentalities here, lending a baroque feel to the songs. But they were also looking around themselves, exemplified by the subtle contributions they elicit from Mike Heron and Robin Williamson of The Incredible String Band, and Bram Martin, cellist on The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby".

The voice and organ reading of "Lovely Joan" is both earthy and utterly exquisite. Meanwhile the chamber ensemble on the

acquired said "Bonne Boy" points to the sisters' subsequent efforts at the groundbreaking Andersens in Eden, featuring The Early Music Consort, and *Love Death And The Lady*.

Shirley's extraordinary voice has haunted me since I first heard it aged 13. It is a singular, close-throated instrument, carrying a purity of tone softened by a slight burr, and with a peculiar hotness of delivery, though not of pitching. Her method was to concentrate on conveying the songs first and foremost "without histrionics", and is most affecting on the tearful adieu of "Black-Eyed Susan".

PIRE BARNES

Cracow Klezmer Band

De Profundis

124346 127143 CD

Full Metal Klezmer

When The Earth Comes Apart

CME 4624102 CD/CD

Tim Sparks

Turist

124346 127144 CD

One of the compensatory benefits following the trauma of diaspora is musical tradition that in time can accept and adapt diverse local influences. Such a process keeps the tradition vibrantly alive. The array of Jewish dance and song forms known as Klezmer flourishes in proportion to its versatility. The Cracow Klezmer Band build on the music's Eastern European legacy. Accordionist Jaroslaw Bester's compositions are close in spirit to the two, respectively reconstructed traditional pieces. The performances are polished and dignified yet convey real warmth. Jaroslaw Tyrala's wailing wails soulfully over Wojciech Fronc's stably bass. Oleg Dyak supplies additional accordion, clarinet and percussion.

When *The Earth Comes Apart* is not the onslaught suggested by the name Full Metal Klezmer, but a sinuous, bluesy outing from an Italian group. Fabio Baster's electric guitar flexes muscle, while Roberto Lancia's alto snakes over Teo Ederle's bubbling bass and Zenzo De Rosa's unequivocal rock drumming. There's real soundtrack potential here, if ever loishen Westerners support their spaghettis counterpart. Meanwhile the CD comes inside a booklet of Alessandra Sparrino's photographs of levitating kitchen objects.

Tim Sparks's acoustic guitar playing is an unsullied joy, at once soothing and sensuous. Add Greg Cohen's rich, sonorous bass and Cyn Beigler's Latin percussion, and you have a totally irresistible album of litig, gleaming dance music. The material is traditional, with a special place reserved for pieces by klezmer clarinetist Nahule Brandwein, but Sparks makes each tune his own, right down to the plaintive cry of the last bant note.

JULIAN COWLEY



Orb of vision: Alex Pridmore
revisited page 10



A Texan first: Mance Lipscomb with Chris Strachwitz

Various Artists

Arhoolie Records 40th Anniversary Collection 1980-2000: The Journey Of Chris Strachwitz

ARHOLIE ARHOLIE491 \$XCD

The cover to the box and booklet of this sumptuous five CD compilation of musical delights shows Arhoolie founder Chris Strachwitz gleefully rummaging through a pile of 78 rpm records that he has supposedly just scored at some undisclosed swapmeet. Although it is impossible to identify the artists' names on the discs in the photo, the odds are that Strachwitz has found yet another motherlode of forgotten Western swing, blues, Old Timey, zydeco, cajun, Mexican polka and gospel recordings to add to his already bulging collection. That collection of raw, earthy "outsider music" outgrew just being a hobby and became a record label called Arhoolie. 40 years later, it continues to release records that mirror the eclectic tastes of its owner and its audience. Strachwitz began his musical journey as a record collector in the 1950s, trawling through the Southern United States buying old blues and trad jazz 78s door to door from people's homes, junk shops, radio stations and flea markets. By passionately hunting down the music he loved from the past, Strachwitz unwittingly joined the small army of fellow American Primitive music fans,

collectors and small time label owners such as Joe Bussard, Nick Perls, guitarist John Fahey, underground comics artist Robert Crumb, film maker and American folk music anthologist Harry Smith and owner of Jaysan (pronounced Jackson) Records, Bob Geddins, who would introduce him to the mechanics of the independent record business. Strachwitz's desire to start his own label had been fired after travelling from California to Texas to hear seasoned blues player Lightnin' Hopkins perform, an "unbelievably personal" experience which triggered off a desire to capture Hopkins's music on record, before it became extinct due to indifference from the major record companies. Although it didn't happen immediately (an album by Texas blues singer Mance Lipscomb was the label's first release), Hopkins would eventually record for Arhoolie, and his appearances here performing an early version of "Bald Headed Woman" and "Please Gentle In Vietnam" crackle with the same high voltage of creative electricity that made the young Strachwitz's hair stand on end when he first heard his hero play. Recorded in Berkeley at Strachwitz's house, "Vietnam" is a softly sung, but firm, protest blues number, pushed aloft by the guitarist's intricate circular strumming technique which rattles out like a swarm of angry bees, while still managing to sound as sweet as the honey oozing from their upturned beehive.

Wisely, the five discs that make up this set have been arranged chronologically instead of devoting sections to any one particular musical style. The result is a constantly fascinating and sonically stimulating six hour mix in several languages which, at one point, joyfully jams free jazz saxophonist and ESP Disk recording artist Sonny Simmons next to the giant oldtime bash of George "Bongo Joe" Coleman without fear of criticism from purists or scholars. Hearing all this music in the same spirit that Strachwitz stumbled across it is the self's salvation. You might not like everything that has been included, but as a rough guide to the label's overall musical manifesto it works beautifully. The only flaw throughout the set is the tendency to lean too heavily on cajun and accordion dominated zydeco music, admittedly an Arhoolie passion (the late zydeco king Clifton Chenier being one of the label's bestselling artists), but one that grates on this listener's nerves after several successive helpings of musical gumbo. As a taster, though, try either "Allons A Grand Coteau" by Chenier, or his short but undeniably powerful "Ay, Au Ai", where the waterfall of notes cascading from his instrument sounds as though it is threatening to engulf the studio where it was recorded. After experiencing him and his group perform live in Texas several years ago, I can honestly testify that, despite being ill and partially disabled, Chenier still managed to make his audience fall off their seats with the power of his playing. On record it works, but nowhere near as dramatically, and filling up most of the two discs devoted to the years 1979-2000 with such accordion masters as Placo Jimenez, Santiago Jimenez Jr, The Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band and Clifton's son Clayton Joseph Chenier unbalances the more chaotic sonic mix thundering through the first three discs.

However, there are numerous quirky exceptions scattered throughout, one of which is Cajun folk singer Odile Falcon's unaccompanied rendition of "La Reine De La Salle" ("The Queen Of The Dance Hall"). A haunting, spectral ballad which, because of its minimalist production and performance, starkly stands out from everything else on the disc and almost drowns out the opposition. Less, in this case, being definitely more.

But the real treat is reserved for the very end. The Campbell Brothers' "What's His Name — Jesus", an electrified gospel number that forsakes the usual gutsy Hallelujah chorus in favour of Chuck Campbell's ecstatic pedal steel playing. Owing more to the psychedelic Delta blues work outs of Jim Hendrix or the high energy chord strabings of Stogies guitarist Ron Ashton, Campbell upturns the theory that the devil has all the best tunes. As gospel and bluesy psychedelia miraculously come together to form a kind of ecstatic rock 'n' roll, you will — just as Chris Strachwitz did over 40 years ago — believe in the power of the music that is waiting to be discovered inside this box.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Charles Curtis
Ultra White Vocal Light/Sleep
B&W BWS000003 12/02/00

Released last year on double vinyl, the CD of two halves and four pieces is designed for simultaneous play on two separate hi-fi or hi-fi systems. Straightaway that sets up a major problem: How many people have two CD players, two amplifiers and two sets of loudspeakers in their home, or if they do can they be bothered to move one of them to make a dual system?

I set up the two separate systems option in my study, but the artist himself makes some cheap and cheerful suggestions for alternatives: for instance, make cassette copies and play them through two boomboxes; connect a Walkman to a guitar amp, listen through headphones on a Walkman whilst sitting in front of your stereo, or, most ambitiously, hook up four stereo sets in a large room with a bunch of friends and play all four pieces in at their posable contrivances. Some party, hey?

Curtis is a classical cellist with fairly heavy-weight credentials. Since 1986 he has worked with La Monte Young, and the influence of Young's works, such as the various versions of *One Study*, casts a long shadow over this release. These pieces were created that exploited the nature of synthesizers. As Young wrote in programme notes from 1964 "Site waves have the unique characteristic among sound wave forms of having only one frequency component concurrently sounding sine waves of different frequencies provides an environment in which the loudness of each frequency varies audibly at different points in the room. This phenomenon can rarely be appreciated in most musical situations and makes the listener's position and movement in the space an integral part of the sound's composition."

Recorded versions of Young's *One Study* demonstrated the dramatically as does Ryoji Ikeda's *Motion* reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Using twice the technical resources, Charles Curtis's piece fails to demonstrate much of anything at all. Over snowswept he plays cello extremely well, though in the style of Young's vocals, which makes a reasonable modern classical music twice removed. He also made an underlining dream test over some steady but rather unimpressive drumming and guitar.

In the press release Donald Miller compares it to the Velvet Underground's third LP and to John Cage's *Solemnities*, but I am at a loss to discover any trace in this level-headed piece of either "The Murder Mystery" or Cage's extraordinary verbal duel with David Tudor's electronics. Would that I could be more kind, since the conception is novel and Curtis waxes very eloquently on sine waves and other matters, but the cello truth is that, either with or without the extra playback, the music is rather lame.

DAVID TROOP

Ernest Dawkins's New Horizons Ensemble
Jo bang Jump
DELMARK DS244 CD

Seagoatfish Ernest Dawkins came up playing in Chicago with Fred Anderson. His generous vision of black music — which includes blues, ethno funk, jazz and free — owes a debt to The Art Ensemble Of Chicago. If anything, his quartet is more rhythmically integrated than that somewhat theatrical troupe. His drummer Aweeay Ri lets the others carry the funky momentum, cutting across the music with dramatic skitters and cross rhythms. Bassist Yosef Ben Israel sounds like he's using a couple of pitch-bending congas.

The ensemble comes together at the end of their longest numbers, as if to assure the listener that the raggedness signals boisterousness rather than incompetence. Pre-arranged doublings — trumpet and cymbals, a rifting saxophone section, trumpet and bass playing a blues ostinato in unison — are refreshingly original and sound like they've been conceived with these particular players in mind.

Indeed it's the absence of academic prejudices about the roles of the instruments that lifts New Horizons above units whose mere mention of fun and freedom are comparable (Sex Mob, say) or The Chicago Underground Trio, whose guitarist Jeff Parker guests on one track. When fully underway, New Horizons evoke nothing so much as a drum circle in which is what all great American rock 'n' roll evokes, from The JB's to Alex Chilton and David. On the title track the groove becomes pentastatic, multipass, quasi-organic. Everyone is into the unfettered gorgeousness of their instruments. Sound Slave Berry's trombone is particularly succulent. Dawkins himself is a persuasive guitar player in a Gershwin-jazz-free manner. Trumpeter Arsen Muhammad has a wide range of effects, and plays a most eloquent blues.

A lack of direction seeps in towards the end of the disc, as if the musicians are in some doubt about quite how appealing they should be. Still, this is Dawkins' first American release. You want his New Horizons Ensemble to be a great success, loud and then cut a blending live album where groove and concept and solos fuse into one.

REN WATSON

Jeremy Dancer
Sentimental Dance Music For Couples
PLUS RESEARCH PRODUCE CD

Dancer's odd style is also strangely appropriate. This isn't dance music in the clubland sense, but rather a synthesized take on your grandparents' mood music, imported from an era of after-dinner waltzing and bossa-jong and replayed through a deflated filter. Dancer's andante rhythms seem

tailored for middle-aged couples shuffling off a mid-century dinner of beef brisket and potatoes. Utterly funny they tread their measured paces to plodding bass and Fey melodies. But Dancer doesn't pretend that this is the original thing. Deconstructive clicks bubbling up from deep in the mix substitute for a drummer's brushwork, and the saxophones and keys sound as carried as the preists on a mid-80s King.

While each song follows its own particular course, the album as a whole is oddly supportive — five songs in and it's hard to remember where you are the last saxophone tones bleed together and the walking basslines tangle and step on one another's toes, drowsy and drunken. Which one suspects, must be the point. Over the course of 11 tracks, the woe hardly wanes, neither rhythmically nor in terms of tonal range. It's all one moth-holed combo up there on the dusty bandstand blowing their fuzzy standards for an audience who's settled beyond listening.

More limited incursions into the album reveal nuances lost on the stereo, the influence of Pyle rumbles in the sub-bass, while Ragner's tongue-in-cheek accordion lingers up the arrangements. Indeed "Diagram Showing The Path Of Bubble From A Sparkling Drink" positively bursts with colour, infinitely more vibrant than the latest laptop Techno release, but it requires standing back to appreciate the full spectrum. Finally, though that ingenious title suggests the missing partner for Dancer's forlorn dweller, some kind of visual element, such as the lush colour washes pictured in the cover art's video screens, Dancer's forlorn would make the perfect accompaniment to a film, preferably characterised by skewed realism and artifice. Does anyone else miss Hal Hartley's music?

PHILIP SHEERBURNE

Faust
The Land Of Ulko & Roux
KULANDERSTROM 0470007 24X2

Much to the chagrin of long standing Faustophiles who esteem the ever-anarchic Jean Herve Peron as the very embodiment of Faustian wit and invention, the present line-up of Faust sans Peron has undoubtedly grown from strength to strength. Indeed as *Riverround* showed the reformed Faust without him is an infinitely more effective unit than the re-named version that initially (but barely) contained him. *The Land Of Ulko & Roux*, a double live set recorded in Helsinki on 20 April 2000, is their fourth Parisian album and it deserves to be assessed solely on its own terms. This might have been possible had its release not unfortunately coincided with the delayed appearance of Red's indispensable box set, *Faust The Wuvvny Years*.

If any comparison with the radically insane invention of their formative years seems unfair, it's not because it's premised upon a demand that Faust 2000 should be rewriting their past.

source research recordings

new — COW — NETWORK
(movement recorded on three parts)
Full length CD release — spring 2001

new — COW — NETWORK
(movement recorded on three parts)
Full length CD release — spring 2001

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(movement recorded on three parts)
Full length CD release — spring 2001

Pan Sonic

Aaltoipiri

BLAST FIRST B99P166 CD

Not quite an invocation to sexual abandon on the disco dancefloor, Pan Sonic's 1999 release, *A*, went so far as to undo a few buttons on the labcoat. Perhaps it was Barcelona living, part of which included a certain amount of digging in the crates for old Studio One wavings, that expanded the studied click, tone and buzz repertoire pioneered by Mike and Ipo in the mid-90s. Another year, another album, and *Aaltoipiri* moves a little further into the warming rays of sun.

The differences are subtle but pronounced. *Aaltoipiri*'s opening track, "Eros", still follows the path of tonal clarity and rhythmic minimalism begun with *Volvo* in 1995, but now there's an electro-dub feel reminiscent of Polo. Interweaving delays on the sharp high click of the offset, a ticking hi-hat and the soft pulsing kick blossom into restrained feedback over a modulating drone. We're almost back in the territory of Farley Funkin' Keith's first House tracks or the Joey Gardner/Little Louie Vega remix of Information Society's "Running" — a rough grain video taste of hanging on the corner, grabbing a toothpick, sipping on an ice cold beer, eyeballing the creatures of the night.

The components of these tracks may be reminiscent of the old Pan Sonic but they sound more like 1980s drum machines than oscillators and disconnecting plugs. Now they breathe air, ripple out into an imagined distance, evoke cinematic scenarios. A "Trans-Europe Express" for the 21st century. "Aanpaal" motors on the locked groove of a gagarin stylus, forever stuck in the splintering channel of its vinyl clod de sac, sucking traces of horns and sirens into the slipstream.

This focus on simplified contrasts of space, volume and temporal division makes me think of the dancing of Saburo Teshigahara, who uses the drama of small gestures so effectively, expanding to fill the emptiness of a vast blue backdrop with absolute stillness or



Waiting for the rain in Spain:
Pan Sonic's Mike and Ipo

shivering with movements so quick they elude even the most concentrated gaze. The programming on "Luos", for example, could hardly be more straightforward, yet there is an impressive mastery of illusion in the way the searing offset and bass drum thump are located somewhere between and behind the loudspeakers, then the ears are gripped and held by a mid-frequency tone that pans continuously from side to side. Early Pan Sonic materials seemed pinned between glass slides in order to be held more firmly under their microscope. Since then, they have moved progressively towards a less austere, more open language. Interspersed among the electro-dub tracks, a number of short tone poems establish scenes suggestive of radio spiritualism, approaching trans, amplifiers left unattended. New Age mood music as heard by sharks in an aquarium after hours, machines of esoteric purpose vainly struggling to achieve autonomous operation in deserted factories or those great moments of tension in old war films when the submarine is trying to evade detection by destroyers overhead. Most of which implies an absence of that old fashioned thing called humanity in Pan Sonic's world. In fact, the manifest human touch is what

distinguishes them from closely related phenomenologists, meteorologists, shareware physicists, number crunchers and algorithm generators. Like "Vainu" on *A*, "Kone", "Muskaus" and "Kierto" take us back 15 years to the bone-breaker, peak-clippin' beats of Marley Marl, Rick Rubin and Burroughs, when 'drum' sounds were made by tapping the top of a microphone or stabbing at the buttons of an Oberheim DMX with a forefinger. Not meaning to be rude, but Pan Sonic can be rough and clumsy and these maligned qualities occupy an important place in electronic music, a field haunted through its history by the deadly consequences of unlimited order, reason and control.

Throughout this album, Vainio and Väisänen cultivate a precarious balance between the elegant formalism of their own constructions and the threatened proliferating chaos of feedback. At the end of the last track, "Kierto", the feedback is engulfing, nauseating, overpowering, finally thinning to the buzz of a harmonic valve on the threshold of filament purgatory. Once again, Pan Sonic achieve meltdown.

DAVID TOOP

On the contrary, it reminds us of the residual elements that remain unchallenged. In particular, the continued presence of Zappa. Deanna's immediately identifiable drumming has yet to either live itself from Faust's legacy or to find a viable new context. No longer the anchor to the primal tundra of Porc's bass, it's stuck to both side and to anchor the sound too closely to the past. But the new album succeeds when it eschews all romantic attachment to an unbreakable heritage.

The sound is at once as dense and as dry as hell, and as crisply contained as only the age of digital encoding can allow. Their tendency to drift, with each track segueing into the next, can leave you yearning for the barbarous editing techniques of yore, if only to add a little definition and distinction. But the

further they get from their past with the past, the stronger they redeem the Faust name

STEPHEN ROBINSON

Jim Fox

Last Things
color blue vision cd

The Gold label was started by Jim Fox in the early 1980s. In its short lifespan it became recognised for its clear identity as a focus for West Coast minimalism and post-minimalism, featuring figures such as James Tenney, Ingemar Marshall, Harold Budd and Chas Smith as well as Fox himself. Now he has resurrected the label, and on the evidence of the initial batch of releases, it's again setting the highest

standards in an area of musical endeavour where banal facility can be a danger.

Fox's *Last Things* is the first new release. He is described as "a courtisanimal Californian composer in the lineage of Cowell, Rudhyar and Harrison". Certainly, the opening piece, *The Copy Of The Drawing* (1992), is a laconic citation. The rest consists of fragments of letters sent to Kenneth at Mt Wilson Observatory between 1915-35, offering theories of the universe. It's stored onto tape, at times almost inaudibly, by Janice Collins, with Fox's mysterious electronic soundscape providing a serpentine commentary — an austere, ethereal experience.

The title track (1987) is for bass cello, glass guitar — it says here — and piano. In addition, Chas Smith plays pedal steel guitar

and the composer is on keyboards. This was less effective, at times close to New Age despite the beauties of Harry Walker's bass clarinet interpretation. That's maybe an imprecise criticism, but New Age, I guess, implies a lack of grit and musical substance, and that's something listeners will have to judge. But overall, this is a promising start for the reincarnated label.

ANDY HARTFORD

Future Pilot AKA

Tiny Waves, Mighty Sea
sacrosanct record co

An album which sets itself the task of fusing Indian music with Scottish folk and rock might

rationally be expected to fall into several traps at once — takenris, exotica mongering, ungenerative atonality in which case, tiny Waves, Piggy Sex is a startling surprise. It is a tremendous record, sidestepping any dangers of 'Glasgow-on-the-Ganges' posturing to fashion a collection that finds productive points of contact between its two primary sources.

Future Pilot AKA is Galloway-Awan Sushil K. Dade helped out by assorted refugees from Belle and Sebastian, Teenage Fanclub and The Delgados. The album shares with that trio a love of melody, a fondness for textured guitars and a scepticism towards mechanistic Dade trails his roots to place those qualities alongside the drones, rages and spirituality of Indian traditions. And it works beautifully, with tracks like "Om Namah Shivaya" and "Shree Ram Jam Ram" building up layers of culturalised charm and deceptively intense vocals.

Any dangers of sliding into po-faced George Harrison territory are held in check by the album's humour (there's a touching, tragicomic version of a pub drunk favourite, "Beautiful Dreamer") and by Dade's sly deployment of other reference points. He has an evident love for the grungier corners of 60s pop — "Blast Of A Drum" could almost be The Troggs, while "Rudhira" is slowed down pop music, as if Dick Dale had decided to go contemplative — which still surprisingly well alongside cleaner tendencies. Such unexpected cross-pollinations — boogie transience one minute, echoes of Link Wray the next — are what make the record so captivating.

ANDY FREDRICK

Lou Harrison

Piano, Concerto
soundscapes 5005 CD

Pianist Joana MacGregor's interpretation of Lou Harrison's Piano Concerto With Selected Orchestra appears on her own SoundCircus label. Harrison wrote the concerto in 1983-85 from a commission by Keith Jarrett. Born in Portland, Oregon in 1917, he has always regarded himself as a Pacific Rim composer, fusing East and West. A student of experimental Henry Cowell, he went on to become an important member of the American new music tradition. He collaborated with John Cage in the early 40s in searching for new percussion sounds and producing a percussion quartet, later Cage, he was briefly a student of Schoenberg. The Japanese gamelan became an enduring influence, like Harry Partch, Harrison has long been fascinated by non-Western tuning systems.

Though the concerto is part of his more recent move to European ensembles, the piano is tuned in Just Intonation — Kimberger's No 2 well temperament system) to be precise, where the black keys produce perfectly tuned intervals of fourths and fifths, and the white keys have a slightly raised pitch. The 'selected orchestra' consists of strings, two harps, three trombones and four percussionists (one from The Sydney

Symphony Orchestra under San Edwards. The first movement has an Asian sounding theme in a weighty almost Brahmsian structure. The second movement "Sampode" is a vigorous dance based on the mademal ensemble, while the third is gentle raga music. The last is brief and percussive.

Joana MacGregor's performance is virtuosic and compelling. In her sleeve-note she describes the concerto as 'an epic piece', which may overstate things a little. Certainly this is the delightful and thoroughly charming — Harrison is surely incapable of writing an unpleasant or ill-judged sound. But underlying its tuneful delicacy is an inner strength. A beautiful celebration of a true original.

ANDY HAMILTON

Matthew Herbert

Let's All Make Mistakes

196504 157 CD

Matthew Herbert's live performances are striking in part for the risk they entail, creating his tracks in real time by sampling and looping the crunching of soda cans and water bottles, he runs from keyboard to keyboard to fill in the rhythm with targeted beeps and stabs of melody. What might seem gimmicky is redeemed by the risk of failure. In an age of CD perfect live sets backed by DAI's and pre-recorded sequences, he will never come to fall flat on his face it is as remarkable as the fact that generally he pulls it off with grace.

This sense of risk is the framing device for Let's All Make Mistakes (citing Beckett's maxim, "Fail again, fail better", Herbert chides those DJs who churn out Pro Tools-perfected max CDs). It's not apparent in the mixing, which is spot-on despite his claims that he "was never supposed to be a DJ", but it's clear from his choice of material that he's not afraid to clear a floor for the sake of throwing down his own particular brand of funk. In addition to six of his own tracks, he includes klemmered micro-house from Perlen's Planetary, scurrying anti-funk from Eronamshi, DBX's robotic "Bliss" and Green Velvet's ominous, electro-house monster "Techniques Out Of Control". Whispers, squallies and offbeat handclaps abound as truncated beats sister into one another. The Sorrow's Appearance comes to mind, the initial very nearly overcome by the devout toots of his own making. But where the Daisies tale embodied a lesson of conservatism, Herbert throws caution to the wind and lets its shards fall where they may, finding worthy patterns in every splintered brokenness.

PHILIP SHERROUN

Åke Hellin

Verbal Brainwash & Other Works
FRODOG 191018123 SACD

Until now Åke Hodel's musical work has been spread pretty evenly over a variety of obscure

Swedish LPs from the 60s and 70s, CD anthologies of Swedish electroacoustic music and, most recently, an Alfa Marghan LP. This three CD set tidily collects his entire output, from his 1963 7" single to his last recorded composition in 1977. Also, three days after the final prodding of the CD booklet, and after all the work spent remastering these four hours of music, Hodel died.

Born in 1919, his service in the Swedish Air Force came to an abrupt end following a plane crash in 1941. It was during his year in hospital that his interest first turned to literature, and then by degrees to experimental writing, visual collage and eventually to audiovisual theatre and composition. By the late 60s the term 'text-sound composition' was coined in Swedish circles to describe the growing scene of composers and artists who were using text, human voice and electronics. Elsewhere in Europe the new artistic medium was being labelled (sometimes interchangeably) 'sound poetry' or 'concrete poetry'. But what distinguished the Swedes was their easy access and enthusiastic use of the facilities of the electronic music studio at Swedish Radio.

In three of the major pieces the key issues are weighty political concerns with an uncompromising narrative content. A central theme is the threat to individual freedom and the struggle against racial and ideological oppression. The supporting text is then often taped and cut in with abstract, repeating electronic and relevant concrete words, usually radically overlaid with references to the spread of cultural imperialism. For instance, on the Cold War thriller, USS Pacific Ocean (1968), an out of control nuclear sub is heading for the California coastline. The crew is ordered to scuttle their ship while lots of major US oil companies are gleefully rectored over. Sousa's proud marching band and nuclear bombs are activated in the background. Some lovely Transpacific shortwave transmissions are also included. Similarly, PP Smith in Photos (1970) makes use of a whole supermarx speech given by Ian Smith, which goes way to a clipped BBC voice instructing a class of children to "Revere. Mr Smith is a good white man" and they dutifully respond. This, of course, is chillingly edited with whistles, dogs barking, hee-hoos on the move and PP Smith is a misleader" spelt out in sharply contrasting edis. Swedish Radio banned this piece, but Hodel managed to secure its broadcast on the underground radio stations in Rhodesia. Where is Eldridge Crower? (1969) refers to the disappearance of the Black Panthers' information minister and is particularly bitter, with no humour and plenty to deal with US parade ground drills and Nazis. Gas cylinders and firing sounds are used to portray the death penalty that was meted out to the last of natives executed.

Clearly there is a strong element of Hanspaul to these works, but there is plenty of measured musicality as well. The illustrative sound effects he chooses and the grounded radio archives are put to great effect. This method of working was way



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Christopher DeLaurenti

N30: Live At The WTO November 30, 1999

SONAR/MP MO NUMBER CD

Christopher DeLaurenti is a sonic artist based in Seattle. He runs a "hardcore free-improvising electronics duo" with Alex Keller, hosts a radio programme broadcasting 20th century music and, along with noted guitarist and "out" music activist Henry Hughes, writes for *Terraviva*, a print magazine which encourages creative music in the North West. The current issue includes a sympathetic and informed review of Roger Sutherland's book *New Perspectives In Music*, showing that avant garde rigour holds no terrors for this bunch. The bizarre development — now that "avant" is a term capable of extracting subsidies from such progressive forces as Ford motor cars and the Japanese equivalent of BT — is a sudden and unironic turn towards anti-capitalist politics. Maybe that's one advantage of being based in Seattle (though the City of London not known as J18 didn't seem to inspire anyone at the London Musicians Collective).

Ever since the impressionists broke out of life class and started sketching people in modern apparel on the beach, everyday materials have been the prime staggerstick of the rebel artist. Dada film maker Hans Richter called for artworks built from "the documented fact". In America, though, unshakeable faith in the transcendental category of 'art' led to Pop Art's "two-Dads" misreading of Dada, replacing its politically motivated assault on bourgeois values with the eternal opposition of art and life (a point made by Richter himself in his book *Dada: Art And Anti-Art*). The progressive ironisation of reality as a means of extending the field of reference for art supplied surprise and entertainment to the final chamber of historically arranged galleries. The vacant products of this post-Duchampian process — "Cage's 433", Jasper Johns's beer can, Warhol's undressed films, minimalism — made art an intellectual endgame. The problem is that Zen moralism is not sufficient to make everyday life under capitalism sublime, meaning that



The time is right for fighting in the streets: N30, WTO, Seattle

Cage's avidity for unprocessed reality — materials undominated by concepts — becomes tedious and oppressive. Although the technological advances of cine reel, super 8, video, magnetic tape and digital recording are indeed wonders in themselves, most American avant-garde experimentation ends up celebrating predictable liberal values and quandaries. You come out of the gallery or film club and gaze at glittering nighttime city streets and think — for two minutes — "Wow, life is so much richer than art".

But what if the streets themselves turn into world-historical theatre? Born in 1967, DeLaurenti is himself a product of American experimentalism. His approach owes debts to Cage and Warhol. But with N30, he has outlanked the pointlessness of official US avant by documenting an occasion of genuine world-historical import: the demonstration against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle on 30 November 1999. N30 showed the world that not everyone in America is content with the depredations its "liberal" economics inflict on the world. "The whole world is watching" shouted the demonstrators, and they were right.

DeLaurenti edited down his four hours of DAT tapes — made in the thick of the riot, as protesters prevented delegates from entering the meeting, and

the police replied with tear gas, pepper spray and plastic bullets — to one 60 minute suite (it is preceded by two short pieces which prove DeLaurenti's skills as a street-talk documenter and orchestrator of noise). He presents discrete audio chunks, each of which makes a particular point. The far off trombitation of the teamsters' truck horns receives cheers from the turtle kids as they realise that the forces of the organised working class were — on that day — behind them. There's advice and exhortations from more experienced agitators, the crack of tear gas grenades being launched and denunciations of the police ("shame, shame, shame"). You listen on the edge of your seat, every shout and noise significant, the raw emotion on show extraordinarily moving. Slogans ripple through the crowd like the chants in a Punkadelic show, abetted by drumming from assorted troops. The polyrhythmic sensibility America imported with its black slaves informs both the demonstrators and your listening. This demo rocks!

Maybe all that avant experimentalism wasn't such a waste of time. Christopher DeLaurenti has documented the sound of a generation reaching towards anti-capitalist consciousness.

BEN WATSON

cheat of its time and unique within the context of the budding Swedish scene back then. The first disc deals exclusively with his early works, all of which are related to his memories of the war. They use sequences of three classes of sound: parade ground marching, explosions of every variety and most interestingly, a loop made up from someone yelling, "Present arms!" On the second and third discs more relaxing electroacoustic pieces use damage-aid speech and nature sounds, again they have a very contemporary feel. More dated is some of *Ecology* (1977) which relates the history of the car with manufacturers' names repeated in a mechanical and heightened

manner. His own voice has something in common with Britain's own voice reader Trevor Wishart.

OLIVE GRAHAM

Ryoji Ikeda

Matrix

1000-1044 28CD

Although it is not made explicit within the packaging of the double CD, *Matrix* began as the audio component of an installation shown in Tokyo as part of the January 2000 ICC Sound Art — Sound As Media exhibition. Ryoji Ikeda is fascinated by the phenomenon of

sound, the way in which material sound sources such as sirens can precipitate dramatic psychological effects for the listener. *Matrix* is the purest illustration of the interest he has released to date.

Actually, "listener" is too misleading a word to use in this context. For *Matrix*, you sat alone in a total darkened anechoic chamber to experience a short version of the piece. My own response to being temporarily trapped in this fetal state was intense. Ikeda's sounds seemed to crawl up my spine, circle around both the inside and outside of my eardrums and exert tangible pressure on my abdomen. It was an ambiguous pleasure: arose in part but also close to the feeling of submitting to a

virus, hovering on the brink of fear at times, simply through being uncertain about how far the experiment would go.

This singularity investigation into acoustic phenomena began tentatively in 1993 with the "Pleasant" to his own *Silence* compilation. Since then the refinement of materials and method has only been interrupted by the media overload — news broadcasts, astronauts and cinema samples, of 1000 Fragments released in 1995. The stripping away of these referential elements raises the question of why they were there in the first place. Like the work of Pan Sonic and Canaan Nock, Ikeda's recordings have an oblique but marked relationship to Techno. They may be

constructed from site tones, and the finest shavings of pure sonic materials, but they sit below in some distant way to the history of deos.

This remains true of the second CD of this set, a haunting rube running at around 120 bpm. It's a music of pattern, as Ikeda makes explicit in his black on white diagrams of ones and zeros for the cover. The organization of these patterns is compelling for being so focused in its evolution. Each element is beautifully sculpted and a sense of poetry emerges from the clarity and juxtaposition of sounds. The first CD *Meter* (for rooms) on the other hand is less overt in its structure. Here Ikeda seems closer to the minimalism of Sachiko M. Ojima Yoshino and Toshimaru Nakamura. Recent statements by these musicians have described the narrowing of their musical palette as a reaction to the information overload of contemporary Japan. In the light, Ikeda's earlier flirtation with media overload seems to have been a critical interlude: an articulation of the problem interlarded into one possible solution that has come to influence a growing sector of the Japanese musical underground. Though not as intense as the installation version, unless you've got a home anchor chamber, *Meter* imposes demands that are as overwhelming in their way as the barrage of signs in Tokyo's Shinjuku and Shibuya districts. Surrender to it and time slows to a crawl. The air turns sticky and thick, thoughts refuse to cohere. Like an optical art for the ears, the patient must live with the movements of your body, the music is rebuilt with every new audition.

DAVID TOPP

Akemi Ishijima

Time Drops

PARADISE DISCS 1013 (D)

Effective electroacoustic work requires that the composer negotiate a fine line between the intellectual pleasures stimulated by the sounds and the purely sensual experience of listening to them. At its best, the two are in perfect balance: the mind delighting in the developing narrative or connections revealed

by disparate sound sources; the series swelling in unexplored moral worlds. It's a difficult trick to pull off, but UK-based Japanese sound artist Akemi Ishijima maddly accomplishes it with grace, wit, and delicacy.

The two discs here display a fascination with time. The older and longer of the two, *At Omi* (1993), was inspired by a science fiction image of a pendulum swinging in a multidirectional magnetic field. Ishijima registers the periphery of the pendulum with lengthy peaks and troughs of electronic sound, twinkling and darting in dawning the regular pulse by the addition of outside forces. While the level of detail is engaging and the piece flows intriguingly, there is the slightest whiff of an academic exercise. Ishijima manages to save herself with one real flash of non-sequential inspiration. Though by including the amplified sound of an egg breaking, she drops up from the subconscious a wealth of imagery. Creation: time, infinity and multiple discrete universes merge in a saton flash.

It's the five minute opener, *Time Drops*, that provides the most stunning example of Ishijima's skill. Composed for an installation with lighting designer Jude James earlier this year, the piece explores the infinite cosmic equilibrium and timelessness within time. The toll of a bell stands for impermanence, mutability and death in most cultures, from Hemingway to the *Yok Of The Heike*. Here, however, Ishijima uses that slow decay to set off concentric rings of oscillation shimmering, skiffing, drops of water creating ripples. Sound decay no longer mirrors our single decaying life; rather it suggests the eternally spreading echoes of our existence. It's a gorgeously sparse and poetic blend of sound and philosophy.

ALAN CURRIE

Italian Instabile Orchestra

Infatisti Sicilante

ENJA ENJACD 02

"Everyone thinks that Italy is the great place for exponents: pizza, but that the jazz is provincial says trumpeter Pino Monella. Founder of the 19

piece Italian Instabile Orchestra in John Corbett's cleverest to its new release. I would do anything to change that image." And so he has done, not least by bringing in other influences, especially folk music. The Instabile, almost uniformly Italian in personnel, is heterogeneous stylistically, and radical in its musical forms. On *Lezard Socratico* it finally matches the promise of its live performances. Part of the problem has been its recordings, which couldn't capture the group's theatrical presentation. But the orchestra has only now achieved an integration and rhythmic finesse to equal its exuberance and display.

This is the more accessible face of the orchestra, in contrast to its recent work with Cecil Taylor (*On Location: The Wire 201*). Gianluigi Trovati's "Scarlatino", a pun on Scarlatti and chosen pop, takes off on a baroque sounding theme played by pianist Umberto Petrin. Trumpeter Enrico Rava's beautifully controlled solo is followed by transformation into carnival mood in 6/8 time featuring tenorist Daniele Cavallaro. In the hazy opening to "Sequenze Fughe", the piano provides a bluish counterpart to the horns. On the very free, kaleidoscopically shifting site track, Antonio Salis, on accordion, brings things to a more focused, foggy conclusion. A deconstructed "Lower Man", the only non-original, showcases the lyricism of alto saxophonist Mario Schiano. Italian Tenor proves to be a fine drummer as soloists ensemble and compositions come together in a triumphant evocation of Pina's vision.

ANDY HAPFELTON

Joseph Holbrooke

Joseph Holbrooke 50

INUS 39 CD

The reincarnated Joseph Holbrooke trio caught here live in Southampton, Cologne in 1998, works the interface between instant composition and totally free improvisation with a blooded grace. The original players—guitarist Derek Bailey, drummer Tony Oxley and bassist Gwyn Barker—enjoyed a short but intense lifespan, holding down a lunchtime slot in a pub in Sheffield from late 1964-66 while

working through the repercussions of the new free music then coming out of the United States. As such, their archival recordings capture a moment of great historical resonance. Listening to the 1965 rehearsal tape, ten minutes of which were released by Inus last year as part of an interactive 3" CD-ROM, is the closest you're likely to get to a blow by blow account of the transformation of US jazz to European Improv. The way they dismantle John Coltrane's "Myra's Mode" using headfirst into an improvised dialogue: you can almost hear its structure break under the weight of three newly freed men. Come 1966 and it was all over, with Bailey abandoning freeplay completely in favour of a career as a composer, leaving Bailey and Oxley to fully develop the aesthetics of improvisation.

The reunited Joseph Holbrooke draws much of their visceral power from this underlying tension. In his bass playing, Bailey is still primarily concerned with 'complex approaches to pulsed time' and it's this constant, restless throbbing that gives the whole set a tough backbone. Bailey and Oxley take the foreground, with the guitar tearing off staccato clips of notes and oscillating harmonics of such force that they blur into Oxley's aggressive, high end percussion. Though the spotlight is inevitably on Bailey's attempt to improvisation, you never get the sense that he's out to prove anything. His work is confident enough to resist the pressure of incessantly initiating new ideas and, as a result, the dynamic of the group feels natural. There's no leading or following no pushing or pulling—just a gradual snowballing of ideas, peaking with a gloriously momentous gush of noise about seven minutes into track two, which feels about as abstract as a ship round the head. Most surprising of all is the last track, three minutes of heavily trained percussion, flanked either side by beautiful, slow passages of arco bass and rising guitar harmonics, simultaneously evoking the lamented textures of AMM and the rock noise of Sonny Sharrock solo and in Peter Brottmann/Bill Laswell's Last Exit. But this is no history lesson: free improvisation has rarely sounded so full of life.

DAVID KIRKMAN



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soundcheck

Audun Kleive

Generations
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

Sidseel Endresen

Underflow
10/19/04 (VIRGIN)

For this, his second album for Norway's Jazztune label, Audun Kleive has ditched the Techno and Metal influences that marked his 1998 debut *Id*. Instead, the ex-Torje Rypd drummer recovers the sound of Miles Davis circa *Dark Magik*/Pangloss' dense rhythmic textures, punctuated by shards of electronic keys and muted trumpet in the past, many unassuming electric jazz outfits have chosen this path to superficial effect. But Kleive has taken on board the shape of the sound. The album's centerpiece, the ten-minute-plus "Olealek" drops you in the eye of a storm of collapsing beats, overamped keyboards and horn scallies, giving a 360-degree view of what's going on. The remaining four pieces have more breathing space, yet paradoxically feel more cluttered and claustrophobic.

Kleive also features on vocalist Sidseel Endresen's *Underflow*, her first album since her two ECM sets of the early '90s. Sparsely textured atmospheres form a bleak landscape across which Endresen wanders, weaving fractured intimate tales of foreboding. Vocals and instruments are integrated so well that on "Distances," it was shocking to discover that the synth line laying across Roger Ludvigsen's limbo guitar was Endresen's wordless, vocalizing "Simple harmonic structures and more obscure voices than you'd expect give the album a folk feel. As with most folk music, tragedy is never far away. But the dignity of her confessional tone always strength in an almost effortlessly sad musical environment.

PETER PHIBBS

Krause/Schellinx/Heiloo

Commutator EP
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

This is the second (and last) yet featuring singer Dagmar Krause, to be unambiguously Vincentini (Lacocca/Ratze) is one of their many sub-lobbies this year. Last time it was *Orchestra*, a 1993 TV cover with Steve Hazy, plus Anthony Moore and Peter Blagovest. This time it's a one-off collaboration with Amsterdam composers Harold Schellinx and Ronald Heiloo. Originally released in 1983 as a limited edition EP, *Commutator* gets through ten songs in 16 minutes. Heiloo provides the piano.

Brevity is the watchword here with only one song creeping above two minutes. Each is a snapshot of a character. A brash young lieutenant tells villagers of "bottle and love shaguns and blood," a disconsolate poet surveys his words, "washed like a comet" after a storm, an acrobat loses a trick in church and then breaks his neck, a priest wonders if

there is such a thing as God. Nothing in the texts links these people, though the song cycle's title implies that they're all commuters in some extended sense of that term. Heiloo's is a carefully nuanced performance, spare, desiccated, chords, arpeggiated and syncopated sturdily accepted of soft beats. But in this exposed context Krause's voice reveals its limitations. Her naturally brassy tone is marvellous at expressing the troubled side of human emotions, much less convincing, however, at conveying the comedy and absurdity that sometimes lurk within tragedy.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Lesser

Centurion
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

It's an old story: punk rock, new-wave signs to a semi-mainstream out of the left closet and enters the "comet" phase of his career. J. Lesser, an artist as conscious of his public persona as K. O'Connell, is well aware of the connotations of jumping from a second-rate American punk imprint like Vinyl Communications to his press release cheekily describes it as a "great" force like "Mastard." But with titles like "Mastard Records Tax Deduction" it's clear that Lesser doesn't expect his indie-blended digital mesh-ups to be licensed by Armin any time soon. And despite his use of skipping CDs and his almost accidental affiliation with the California laptop Techno scene, tracks like "Digitally Glitch Worship" make clear the conscious aspect of Lesser's own gay-facing tones.

"Lesser claims that 'Centurion' is a 'lost' recording" that his previous records, a claim which will certainly meet with some resistance, but the point holds up: this isn't simply more for indie's sake. The opening minutes submit the listener to a baffling swirl of over-the-top, distorted, bubbling organic grunts and drums, a bass rhythm picked high enough to send the cats running for cover. But behind the chaos there is a structure, though never of the linear sort.

Lesser's intention to be "less loop-based, more schizophrenic" is clear in the way tracks slide sideways into one another. If initial blasts present an undifferentiated stream of noises and glitches, consecutive sessions reveal the sediments settling into compelling patterns. And just when tracks like "For Instant" and "On The Kids Trip" get truly amazing, out jumps a moment of brilliance like "Intuit Like An Inuit," a shell-hipping collaboration with Blecktrum from Blecktrum.

Genre/loop ready summing up. There's simply too much here to attend to at once, which makes the album's tendencies much more appealing. It's certainly not only lead to burnout, but surgical listening strikes reveal the richness hidden in the mess, like the pairing horn-caps of "Deep Soled In The Back Lane" or the tension between the track's industrial rhythms and its increased Ambient tones. As the chimes peter out into a tender

hissing, the moment of clarity counts for as much as all the noise that's preceded it.

PHILIP SHEDDEN

Mass Producers & Caroline Kraabel

Mass Producers PLUSE 1 And PLUSE 2
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

Since leaving her aboriginal punk-jazz combo The Horrors, Caroline Kraabel has turned toward freely improvised music, and an almost evangelical commitment to acoustic music. Her solo CD of 1997 *Now We Are One Two* (also on Dark Below Cloud) had an almost confessional intensity in documenting her solo performances. Shortly after, she conceived of "Mass Producers" to explore the compositional and spatial possibilities implied by a group of 2D women saxophonists circling an audience. Although recorded ambitiously some of the spatial effects — such as a round-robin improvised solo where everyone plays one note — fail to translate to stereo.

Nevertheless, the music is substantial enough to warrant the transition to CD. "PLUSE 1" is a composition of rich complexity. After a yearning introduction, the 45-minute piece starts somewhat episodically, tentatively passing through many moods — single notes, raging, muted melodic lines, canons, swooping vocal lines and complex vocal harmonies. It's as if Kraabel wants to explore all the possibilities that such a paying opportunity has to offer.

At the piece's center is a clear declaration of human frailty. This stark assessment is redeemed in and rewarded by some compositional coups. In concert, during its second half, the audience is immersed in breathtaking clouds of overtones, and a complex buzzing of interference patterns and difference tones. On CD it's all possible to experience the sound of a soul screaming. Could this be contemporary religious music? "PLUSE 2" is simpler in conception, starting with long, sustained complex chords and then moving into a repetitive trancelike mold — both constructs designed to transform one's sense of time. At ten-minute looped section spools its promise with excessive repetition.

PHIL INGLAND

Microstoria

Model 3, Step 2
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

This is the first studio collaboration from Markus Popp and Jan St. Werner since 1996's *...and Since*, then, Werner has reached the electronic first rank with Mouse On Mars and Popp's Oval project has been planned for its remapping of sound and software possibilities. The pair's earlier achievements illuminate this release. Much of the music generated, processed and edited digitally as pure sound is piercing and abrupt, more like

experimental data, more valued for its information content than as a relic of passionate creation. The album's link, too, suggests a methodical demonstration of a masterpiece worthy of Hippo and Salsola.

Yet the music is warm and immediate. The most common sound here is electric guitar, and all its associations come through the processing unaltered. Derek Bailey's playing is a good reference point, but better to think of the early recordings from a earlier German generation, perhaps "Aulek" from the second Kraftwerk album. A kind of playfulness emerges, as if they had discovered that a few simple tricks applied to real instruments can change the meaning of their sounds, to acquire hitherto undreamed worlds. Imprecision is the key to Microstoria's sound, however long and considered the preliminary compositional processes. The nine tracks on the album, lasting between four and five minutes, appear not to repeat sounds or rhythms. Instead they work in the precarious manner of a free session. Each event here has sustained interest, while leading on to the next, forming a convincing narrative while defying the listener's expectations. Model 3, Step 2 manages to win with ease. It is a pleasure to listen to.

ANDY CHAPPEL

Moodymann

Forevermore
10/22/04 (VIRGIN)

Kenny Dixon joins aka Moodymann's third and best album is his most merciful to date. What's saying something for a producer who's built a fanbase on volatility. Detroit-based Dixon has always been hyper-aware of his music's protocols, both 97's *Silent Introduction* and 98's *Moodymann Brown* reveal in states of mind hitherto unheard in the House. Dixon's imitated howl-horn-horn-horn on one hand, giving perfecting group sustained to exclusive lengths on the other, early since a niggy always a niggy. *Forevermore* to Mob Deep than Moody coupled with Nick Rodgers, infusing loops, pumped-out, sooty skeletons, but then, he's backless, heart murmuring, ambulance. Coupled with a consistent refusal to talk to dance music, they start to sense the ball, even extending a shallow Moodymann casts over modern electronics.

Forevermore is a masterpiece of mood programming the first ten minutes, more seamlessly and disconcertingly from the pounding Afro-spiritual chant of "Meanwhile Back At Home" to the gorgeous shuffle of "Wednesday Night People" to the small hours interlude of Dixon mumbling testy to himself, radio playing in the background and into "Set Up," a stand-out track that swerves menace as treacherous synth roll and best around a blaxploitation sample. A home movie feel leaves the album, as if Dixon is sampling straight from his video cam. "Don't You Want My Love," a homage to West End era disco strut, takes us into a

synthesizer that body snatches Uncle Bob from *Stoney to Heaven* while the gloom Techno of "Track 4" channels David's soul and the ghost of Curtis Mayfield (singing: "Finally's death. How stinking still is 'The Truth', a surging, impossibly swirling groove totally analogous to a soul/dragger songing "I love you very much" with all the passion she can muster. Someone asks appreciatively "Who's your producer?" "The devil," the little girl replies. "Where's he live?" "The ghetto." In *Between* David Cronenberg cults this permeable conduit "totally bleed through" a trait exemplified by "The Thief That Stole My Bad Days (Yo Blessing Me)" where a roaring gospel sermon gradually absorbs itself amazingly into the Floodymania's midstream. He's discovered a way to record his mind's ear and turn reality inside out in the process.

KODUW USHIN

Mount Vernon Arts Lab
One Minute Blasts Running To Three
And Then Diminishing
CD:CE CD464 CD

Various Artists

Dr. Who — Music From The Tenth Planet
CD:CE CD465 CD

The music of Drew Mulholland, aka Mount Vernon Arts Lab, is filled with a nostalgia for the apocalyptic culture of the 20th century — the dead or ambience of long abandoned World War Two underground defences, the bleak, bleak information films of the 70s, the sound of the four minute warning. More and more his extra-musical activities — increasing abandoned military sites and discovering Scotland's secret goings-on — have come to inform his music aesthetically. One *Finalist* Blast, is the closest he's come to a perfect symphony. Recorded 100 feet below the ground in a subterranean nuclear fortress outside St Andrews, it combines the noise of analogue electronics with a chilling evocation of total claustrophobic panic.

On being confined in an anechoic (completely silent) room, the composer John

Cage recalled being startled by the presence of two sounds. One high, my nervous system in operation and one low, my blood in circulation. "Housed inside a Faraday Cage specially designed to prevent the penetration of electromagnetic radiation, the intense silence of the sunken bunker is highly conducive to deep listening, and Mulholland's performance, all deep rumbling bass and high static hiss, could be an exaggerated minor reflection of Cage's oft-quoted observation. Mulholland's fetishistic obsession with the sound of oscillators, Ploogs and theremins was partly formed by early mindbending encounters with the Dr. Who sound effects records coming out of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop. *Music From The Tenth Planet* was curated for Ochre by Mulholland as a follow up to the *Tomb Of The Cybermen* released on his own Via Satellite label. Originally broadcast in 1966, it's a bizarre mix of progress, bitter spirit, nostalgia, the space language of swinging conductor Joe Meek, and early experiments in musique concrete. It's no wonder a whole generation grew up permanently warped with this as a bedtime soundtrack.

DAVID KERNAN

Oscar Noriega's Play Party

Luciano's Dream
CD:CE CD466 CD

Chris Speed

Emot
SONAAR'S 10104 CD

Cuong Vu

Pure
WRITING FACTORY WFW001 CD

Born in Vietnam, trumpeter Cuong Vu trained at the New England Conservatory. He claims to dislike his instruments, which may account for his imperious style. Fractious now and then but in a controlled and calculated way, never histrionic or needlessly showy. He also speaks of his distaste for jazz yet his music sits comfortably in that

category, and he has won the approval of such first jazz musicians as fellow trumpeter Dave Douglas and drummer Gerry Hemingway and Bobby Previte.

On Luciano's *Dream*, Cuong Vu's unflappable articulations provide the perfect foilstone to Noriega's more overtly emotional playing. The alto saxophonist, raised in Arizona where he doubles on bass (clannet is an eloquent and expressive musician. With Tom Ranney on the drums and Brad Sheik on guitar, this is a valuable quartet, and Noriega's excellent compositions incorporating Balkan and other folk elements, fuel their exchanges. Even when growling and spluttering, Vu seems to leave something unsaid, best left implied.

Emot features Speed's quartet, Yeah No at work, infectious melodies, effective harmonies and lively rhythms are the norm as Speed's records, Jim Black's agitated drums, Ska's Swenson's buoyant bass and Cuong Vu's trumpet coast domestic boundaries with reckless abandon. The music's jazz coordinates extend back to bebop, but also align comfortably to a variety of folk traditions. There's even a brooding ambient soundscape called "Wolzing". The album may be stylistically eclectic, but the palpable commitment of the playing makes this a coherent and extremely effective unit, poised between drummer Black's restless exuberance and the trumpeter's self-possessed concentration.

Cuong Vu's on his own right has produced in *Pure* a more consistent set than his debut *Bound*, released by Omnifone last year. On some tracks, Vu and co-producer Laurent Brondel create echoey environments, projecting the trumpeter's cool dist in elaborating textures and evolving mood into an acoustic hall of mirrors. Some tracks the literally thinking electronic, based on *Bound*, disappears here, often weaving virtuosic patterns around the absence of the bebop. Drummer John Holdbeck, on the other hand, keeps his head down and spurs straight, especially when the shadowy atmospheres start to cloak in

JULIAN COWLEY

The Orb

Cydonia
IN:AD CD467 CD

Three years in the making, *The Orb's* new album is a mighty revealing document. What a reveals is what happens to the day before yesterday's pioneers once the urge to be edgy is replaced by the contentment of making nice noises. It's an extremely listenable record, full of stay-of-moments of delightful mischief, but it's as innovative as a favourite old armchair. If it wasn't by The Orb, it wouldn't merit attention in this magazine.

Of course, avant artists have never had much time for The Orb. They were never stern, sour or aloof enough to have chart-topping albums and appeared on *Top Of The Pops*. They showed ample evidence of a sense of humour, and their tracks needed not to Erykah's on the radio on TV, advertised, mainstream. But that approachability meant they were reaching and influencing a large constituency, exposing them to wider audiences to otherwise inaccessible sonic possibilities. It's more than likely that they were, for many, the gateway to more musically adventurous sounds. For that alone, as Harry Hill's Souffler the Cat might say, respect due.

Judging by *Cydonia*, *The Orb* show primarily Alex Paterson plus a slew of guest contributors have concluded that since the early 90s served them so well, they might as well stay there. This is the best 1992 album you'll hear in 2001. More recent Orb forays into drum 'n' bass and the darker reaches of Techno have either been abandoned or assimilated into this album's congenially dated soundscape. There's nothing here to rattle your teeth. It's music destined to be played behind the shops' headphones. "Custumes" is a lush electro-pop. "Ghost Dancing" is a deft funk, kicking back with Nina Woll on vocals. And "Promise" has fun parochial Bollywood strings into a Life Perry dub of a film noir score. The only times the album dips from its comfort zone into being actually regrettable are those points where The Orb sound like they're impersonating the people who borrowed

Hari Hongisto
Haase Poulsen
Teppo Hauta-aho

AAO2 1511

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the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

A crumpled Swedish package sent "Ekonomeer" with Fat Cat's address on it provides the context for the label's new compilation <<No Witches, No Phages>> (FAT 14 CD). All 19 tracks are taken from unissued demo tapes, DATs, minidisks, MP3s and CDs recorded during the last 18 months from unissued artists around the world. Supplementing the release, Fat Cat's Website is running a continually updated MP3 section for demos, plus an online response to help artists manufacture and distribute their own work. So far, so worthwhile. How about the music? Well, not a single track talks short. There's some excellent electronic, post-rock, dub House, digital abstraction and fragmented breakbeats from the likes of Com.A, Monashied, Duplo Remote, Mikara and Chik Zoony. Uyo-E and Bean extend the range with the Sata-like "Ponderosa" and The Billy Mule's "Asteron" is an outstanding post-rock track.

At the end of 1970s, German artist Hans Hacke scornfully incorporated the phrase "Business could host an exhibition to tell its own story" into his installation *Alte Welt Komt For Tomorrow*. The statement indicates that *Psychogeog Vol 1* (Cramped Dick Rock CD/HW069 CD) is right on the money. Compiled by DJs Seifer 45 and Seif O'Leary, this amazing set of West German TV ad and campaign themes from 1960-75, recounts a similar tale of economic miracles, ideological alliances and cultural borrowings. Much of its material started life as promotional freebies, offering danceable solutions to life's major problems. Sweet And Seif make-up is introduced with soulful horns and discreet veils. Polycolor comes at you with chokey organs, part sax and a wordless female wail. Meanwhile, the restrained "Nascali Calypso" (from *Elys*, the earliest track here) indicates that *Elys* and The Beatles had yet to make their presence felt in the Bundesrepublik. The sound of grown men and women frugging and clattering themselves into a frenzy over hardcores. Shoes: "Solarte mit weng", suggests that a furthest mirror has been held up to the pop modes of the era. Christian Bruhn's German mood show theme conjures an image of Shakti swaggering down Times Square, and so on. But who can tell what the hell is going on from the squealing guitars and funky harp twined around the musical language and helpless screams of Johnny Teupen's "Mikilliters"?

Soundtracks for imaginary films are an inventive, if not exactly new organizing

principle. *For Film 5* (Freibank CD6 CD) collects 24 tracks with cinematic potential most of them reimagined. Armin Tobin Burnt Friedman art of how their own vistas to consider. The Aod tips of Steve Bug's "Loverboy" are diverting in the light of their place, so too the outbreak of paint court games on Dieter Squatan's "Cantique Bivertin". NU Ulin's continues "E-Min An Pawky", a tantalizing sort of coded best messages blazed into the ether. By day he stretches in Entzunder Neubauer, who alerts "Gottlieb in Mene" into a densely packed and artful study in space, shading and bell ringing.

Some may wish to play in the dark *Emre (Dark Matter)* (Source Recordings SR0901 CD) collects new works from UK, Andrew Poppy, Cyclothe Cohl, Lief Daggen Ovarum and Soufice Records. That attempt to map black holes of the night and of the soul. Nothing terribly surprising—dabulous whiffs of reggae electronics, silent, without open expanses of silence, characost sound palettes, demons tapping and lurking in the mix, voices whispering Socratic veins; and even so, it's an adequate survey of the kind of underground electronica that sees the world as one by German larynx.

From the brothers going to the brothers' glitch: *Bip-Hop Generation* (Bip-Hop BLEEP01 CD) opens a new series, covering the international clicks + cuts underground. The first features the geek-pop/electronic of American Marum, the detached waltz and crackle of German Schneider TPA, and the particle board dub of Italian Massimo, plus Duchmann Gomp, Frances L'aura Mikramas and British ex-pat Phronet. The underground Highborn generation is well represented on *Definition IV* (Copestake CD04 D17 CD). Tracks like Rascos' "The Unvisited", Peanut Butter Wills' "Run The Line" and Dr Doom's "No Gurus" make it a neat summation of all those "Lure Psycho" states that have seduced mainstream rap commentators with the noise of Cops up in arms.

For their latest bout of cultural lunacy *La Paloma #2* (Ikonit US0072 CD), the anarchic Bavian label drags Lounis Almeida's "La Paloma" around the world: the most striking versions are Zartobor's Koutabai Kalica in ex-Albanian song, a Holyday's Rayner transposing the song to a Turkey inn, Pedro Alkari's sweet band take, Klaus Wunderlich's Prozac carnival Phog send-up and German puppeteer Elias Costello's rock the night! *Elys* post-punk, poka waltz. (Reviewed by Ben Borshoff; Louise Gray, Ken Hollings and Peter Shapiro

from them in the first place, as if the Ramones had planned to relaunch The Offspring. "Pum Island", for example, is The Orb doing Sneaker Pimps on Soots in Their Eyes—a sad and unnecessary gesture.

For the most part, though, this is engaging middle-aged electronic—a designation you may interpret as condemnation, but one which is intended to convey the push relaxed liberality of the record. Innovation after all can be so exhausting, especially when you're getting on a bit (as both myself and Paterson are). All that straining to be new, those tense yearnings to break boundaries can leave you longing for somewhere to rehabilitate quietly. Gylson offers such respite, and once or twice gets genuinely exciting. "A Mile Pump Of Land" where some initial sweats of paranoid noise pollution resolve themselves into agreeably clumsy industrial cyberfunk is the standout track, while the concluding "Lengthy Terminus" is an unrestrained return to Ambient roots that would at happy on the last Biosphere album. If you want radical rock elsewhere, but if you want to spend time catching up with old friends, then Gylson will do nicely. It even provides cut-ups of old news bulletins and information broadcasts over its amiable rhythms. But it does stop and start of using this as a journey.

ANDY REBURNST
Otomoto Yoshihide & Voice Crack
Bite, Bitch And Signs
post-rock 11/10

Otomoto Yoshihide & Voice Crack

Bite, Bitch And Signs
post-rock 11/10

Christian Marclay & Otomoto Yoshihide

Moving Parts
ASH+CDP1, 1000 CD

In the eternally productive present that seems to compress current reality for sound-manipulators/guitarists/tumblerists. Otomoto Yoshihide, what price the chance to look back? For the listener too, in the midst of a release deluge rapidly approaching. Merzbowden proportions, the opportunity to compare methods past and present is as easily welcome one as these two releases provide it. The duo with Marclay dates back to 1997 and '98, when Otomoto was just on the cusp of moving away from the explosively dynamic, pluriphonic style of his youth, while the collaboration with Weiss, cracked electronically Voice Crack was laid down a mere nine months ago and finds him in more recent high-pitched sneezy mode.

The old line about piano players rarely ever playing together seems equally relevant to turntablists. Marclay's DJ Tiro has begun to break down these perceptions, but his work here with Otomoto provides a glimpse of some of the difficulties and the potential pay-offs involved. The ever-present danger in group

tumblerism is of information overload, as each player's individual structures and responses are accelerated past breaking point the sheer quantity of possible musical, intellectual and textual avenues leading to a cacophonous meltdown. Which of course is no bad thing on occasion, but not for the whole set, please. Indeed, the pieces that work best here are those where frenetic jumpcut tendencies are pared back to focus on a smaller number of sounds. "Derangement" sees the dynamic duo deftly building rhythmic patterns out of surface crackle, skip and pop before being deranged by a mammoth loon. Or "Suburban" mellifluous harp and piano vinyl crackle and looback whistling are periodically assailed by a lawnmower motor and noise intersections providing a consistent and amusing take on what happens when parental Sunday crops meet hunger teenage reality. Much of the rest, though, is bewilderingly cut-up, so seriously impenetrable and intensely warring, so it's a relief when the last track begins with a good 15 minutes of total silence. Freed from trying to discern trails of musical logic, the brain luxuriates in nothingness before, predictably, being awoken by a brief blast of backwards voices, hyper-famenco and gamelohow themes.

Ever since Otomoto got into his minimal misuse of stereo equipment phase, a collaboration with Swiss techno turners Voice Crack was on the cards. Although Otomoto's reflection of high-end sneakers around dranal instants may not seem like an ideal partner for Northern Marclay, in reality Gyl's usual industrial clang attempts have obviously been made to find a common ground. There's an intense focus upon the fine detail of the unfolding electronic fields with the Swiss duo providing a constantly shifting foreground of spontaneous events to Otomoto's sparer high frequency backgrounds. The melding of the two provides an extraordinary experiences to the sound, not in imitative associations. Particularly impressive is the fourth track, which conjures up visions of being inside an anthill on a tropical night, hearing the shrill whine of crickets outside. The variety of Voice Crack's multiple, jerry-jiggled devices needs little mention, but Otomoto's sheer inventiveness with his frequencies, from the electronic chatter to torres that perceive and vibrate like King Hans's tuned metal bars, deserves praise. This is a fine piece of work by any standard, and ample proof that Otomoto's prodigious workrate has done little to dull the quality of his output.

ALAN COFFINGS

PUT (Phillipp, Uliher & Turner)

Umlaut

MURCH/NUVE K000425-CD

The drummer Roger Turner's one of the gods of tape improvisation. There's no one

smarter, faster or more dedicated, and when he taps out half a junkyard's worth of percussion on your floor, you know that what he's going to extract from that pile will be a thing of beauty and excitement. So how come this is such a chilly, dull record?

These 16, mainly short, pieces were recorded in a Hannover studio in January 2000. Turner is in the company of trumpeter Birgit Ullrich and bassist Ulrich Philipp. The record sticks determinedly to a very narrow band of panoptic screeching and restrained noises. Most notes are short and abnormal in some way and after a while you long for Ullrich to simply play a full toned note on the trumpet, instead of endlessly demonstrating the variety of peculiar noises she can make with the mouthpiece.

I am dimly aware that this low-calorie, minimal style is in favour with some continental improvisors and it feels as though Turner has gone along with the game. Even so, I've heard the *Itchy & Scratchy* thing done better in London free-jazz clubs: maybe by people with less classical training and technique, who manage to whip up heated tensions and unpredictable adventures. Here, a dearth of surprises results in a build-up of introverted tension that made me want to rush up to the musicians and massage their shoulders.

So, not particularly free then – and not new either – people have been playing variations on this style for as long as I can remember. In some ways this is distressingly backward-looking music: gazing into the rear view mirror at the worst tendencies of serolett composition that avar *Boulevard du désac* into which contemporary music used to rush with such glee.

Having said all that, if Turner brought this group to Britain, I might well go and see them because often the physical gestures of live performance can make sense of the music and restore some of the human warmth squeezed out in a studio recording. The sleeve notes evoke "the immense richness of acoustic detail. The trumpet may within milliseconds mutate from a melodic instrument to a generator of subtly shaded noises". We wish.

CLIENT DATA

Scannerfunk

Wave Of Light By Wave Of Light
SILVER SUNDY CD

Scannerfunk seems to be Robin Rimbaud's way of disseminating between the more experimental Scanner projects and a more pop orientation. Dance beats and rhythms dominate, but there is also an interesting use of the piano that harkens of Mozart sonatas: chess House and even chessier Trance. The album opens with the command "Listen to my voice", and then comes the hypnotic incantation "You call I am call". A grand piano immediately starts playing two notes very quickly with the left hand. There are regular pile-ups of beets and piano keys, as if at a sprinkling of mistakes and winners. As the track progresses, this repetition is harmonised by the right hand playing an algorithmic melody. The use of mimetic classical piano in the first and last tracks points to how this structure is echoed throughout by more recent keybase technology. On "Automatic" a 303 is offset by a jangling Accordion while the wailing Trance line on "Light Turned Down" could almost be by Jimi Hendrix. It took a while to notice for I imagine the relationship because I couldn't find my way through the labyrinth of sounds.

choirs and strings to get beyond the pantheon of progressive House and Trance clichés. Among the three downtempo numbers "Redstone Sun" has snippets of the trademarked scanned conversations, and even though there aren't any lyrics, its deep bassline and strings recall the strange combination of melancholy and singalong nostalgia of "Ferry Across The Plessey".

RON ROBINETTE

Matthew Shipp's New Orbit

Matthew Shapp's New Orleans
 history can be found at
www.shapp.com

New Orbit represents the first new recording from pianist Matthew Shipp since his return from a year-long sabbatical. It's an introspective set, a series of sparse

composers marked by a reflective, not quite melancholic grace that feels closest in spirit to pianist Muzil Richard Abrams's music of acceptance and peace. As ever Shipp is shadowed by bassist William Parker and here the two of them could be expending on the minimal blueprint they laid down on *Surrendered*, their last recording as part of David S. Ware's earthshaking quartet. It similarly cuts things back to their essentials to arrive at a simple, eloquent statement.

Drummer Gerald Cleaver may be new to the Parker/Shepp axis, but he's already cut his teeth as a member of guitarist Joe Maneri's quartet, an energetic role that required all sorts of Eliot Jones-styled strategies for keeping things bopping and moving beyond mere timekeeping. His task is primarily textural, slinging the cymbals for little golden tones and slow rumbling on the floor tom without disturbing the delicate equilibrium of Shepp's compositions. Completing the quartet trumpeter Wladimir Leo Smith's lonesome bugle call really defines the session, extending slow lines into epic arcs that recall nothing so much as the orchestral visions of Miles Davis circa *Blo' Fun*.

The thrill from the opening "New Orbit" is a nostalgic little sigh for piano and bass, resurfaces repeatedly throughout the disc accumulating emotional weight with each round. Between refrains, Smith stretches out with some brassy boop, perfectly suited to Cleaver's ebullient rhythms, but the moments of quiet communion between Shipp and Parker are where the heart of this music really resides. Minus high energy drama or virtuosic displays of technique, their affecting playing results in music of clarity and subtle beauty.

DAVID KEENAN

Mark Springer

Nature/Music/Food/The Stars And
The Planets

EWI DOB 2900

A repressed piano note, slowly marking time against a developing underturrent of stealthy

depths down in the bass clef offers an introduction of some pose to Mark Springer's third solo album. Formerly of 80s Bristol group Rap Rag & Pinc, Springer's *Nature* perpetuates the links between no holds barred performance and an inquisitive approach to form and function.

Currently there are distinct sides to Springer's work. At the keyboard, the focus is on texture as much as anything else. His melodies develop slowly and the onsets, scale-influenced structures are probably not accidental. The piano seems to function as an exploratory probe that defines the limit of each piece. And once done, Springer's saxophones play on a wild unorthodox improvisation that is layered by Cwi (Pfortshausen). Danner's sharp drum patterns and the Zoom Quartet's electronic atmosphere. It proves to be a responsive, fluid mass: strange motifs born out of the main CD's ten pieces. The second CD, a recording for piano improvised live at the Union Chapel in a different but altogether there. There's something of Philip Glass's piano works to it, but in total, its single piece "Vertical" states its themes with a more logical romance.

LOUISE GRAY

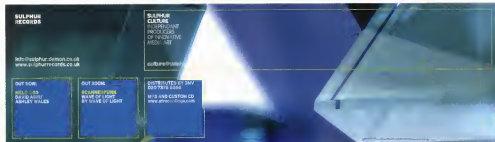
Karlheinz Stockhausen

Flute And Synthesizers

Karlheinz Stockhausen

3 x Refrain 2000
STOCKMUSIC.COM

The meticulously prepared Stockhausen edition continues to grow and diversify with these recordings made in August 2000. *Flute And Synthesizer* features flautist Kathinka Paszner performing seven works composed since 1983 as components of the epic project *Light*. She solos unaccompanied on three *Flores*, *Think* and the peccola piece *Enlightening*. The other compositions – *Zungenstapeln*, *Klosterstudie V*, *Kornel* and *Flute* – locate her in predominantly electronic contexts. She is a virtuosic musician with a flair for the dramatic, and



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soundcheck

that's exactly what all these pieces require. Stockhausen's theatrically led by long expositions of working with acoustic contrasts, structural tensions and mobile forms, isolated from the staged performance: the music still works powerful effects.

The composer himself talks us through 3 x *Aktion 1000*, and an English language version is available. Benjamin Krasker plays piano with three woodwinds, with Antonio Pérez Abellán displaying sampled celesta sounds plus three antique cymbals, and Andreas Brögger on vibraphone, three cowbells and glockenspiel. The exposition with musical examples, a painstaking occupying 26 minutes of the 64 minute CD. It also has a distinctly didactic flavour: with each of the three versions of *Reflexion* (a piece initially composed in 1959) by Refraction to structural analysis and advice on how to listen. Not to every listener's taste, and it's tempting after hearing a few times to program the commentary out and to approach the music unaided or with the written account supplied in the booklet. But Stockhausen apparently conceived spoken explanation as an integral part of the overall composed process. The music, rock hand suggests between repetition and difference. A tranquil ground studied with luminous lists, glissandos and clusters, smudges of melody and vocal interjections accures the realistic: look that exists with seemingly limitless permutation and variation of a limited set of materials. The sounds and spaces between them create forms that float, until the composer's voice reappears to disclose the nuts and bolts.

JULIAN COWLEY

Taku Sugimoto & Günter Müller

I Am Happy? You Are Happy

FOR 4 SAMES 1140 CD

Taku Sugimoto & Annette Krebs

A Criso In Berlin

USA 8046 SPMS CD

Taku Sugimoto & Kevin Drumm

Deti

SOMCROSS 5201 CD

Taku Sugimoto used to play psychedelic rock, influenced by MC5 and Velvet Underground. He checked it in to learn the cello, and returned to the guitar with a new vision of its instrumentality, playing less, listening more, letting the air between the strings do the talking. His current introspective, enigmatic and unorthodox style suggests a minute, painstaking examination of the elements of rock and noise. The features are still just about viable — his pick-ups are grungily dirty and buzz at odd moments — but the speed and aggression have been drained from all the

gestures. The emphasis is not on reaching across space from player to listener, but in letting space have room and in trying to identify the inaudible hum of Unson.

I Am Happy — with the increasingly interesting Swiss percussionist Müller, is a rich and even soothing duologue from October 1999. Purring rhythms provide a subtle backdrop to the arding, clinking guitar figures — a background to a music which is all background and which from the outset seems to disappear. Fragile, tentative yet assured, this sounds as though it were recorded in a balloon drifting away from a fireworks display, with a pronounced sense of disance created by the ever-shifting perspective, and the dancing sensation that all is evaporating in imperceptible darkness.

Krebs is a young German guitarist who is part of that Berlin school of shagged down transparent musicality, of which Rada Haffner is the aesthetic godfather. She adds some electronics which punctuate her. Play 2000 out with Sugimoto with a sense of accelerated, foregrounded unease. Sugimoto plays guitar and so string bass, using some cello like rumblings and gassy hisses which give us to truly unpleasantly acquainted, smother him. There's an urgency about it that undercuts the notion of its playing being at all Feldmanesque. Space here opens up to reveal dramatic spaces, bomb-blasted walls and rotten plaster closing in on the unsuspecting listener. This is the music of decay, quiet but seething and as often as not displaying a wicked brutality. It's worth storing your head into it.

The duo with Drumm is from April 2000 in Tokyo and is more fluid, relaxed and comparatively melodic, with more notes and a wider line. This reaches out to the listener from the very beginning, so that while it is not as recalcitrantly challenging as the Berlin set it's more alluring and seductive, with bettering and pulsating flights into frenetic activity as well as languorous descents into near stillness. Taken together the three releases reveal a complex and adaptive figure in Sugimoto, someone who has, fairly become one of those collaborators of choice whose reliance on the flow of improvised music is likely to be far-reaching. Watch this space.

RD BAXTER

Ulan Bator

Ego Echo

LES DISQUES DU NOUVEAU ET DE L'ACRÉ 02545451

CD

Various Artists

Ulan Bator D-Construction

LES DISQUES DU NOUVEAU ET DE L'ACRÉ 02545469

CD

For their fourth album *Ego Echo*, French group Ulan Bator called in former Swans member Michael Gae as producer. He also had a hand

in the arrangements, as well as releasing the disc on his Young God label in the USA. Located at the melodic end of avant rock, Bator's is not an original sound: recalling the work of too many other groups for comfort "Hemisphere" has something of the early Pink Floyd a psychedelic aura surrounding its chugging bass riff, spazzy cymbal play and dreamy arpeggio ripples. This song comes out to the phrase "to imperium" which is repeated for almost a minute. After a noising and San-Ho's first full remembrance of the Six "Santa Lucia" slows to walking pace. However, the 16 minute "Let Go" starts auspiciously, its non-rhythmic, non-melodic guitars and rustling percussion setting up some interesting scabrous textures, though a pedestrian duet is soon introduced to anchor the rogue elements: the final part sounds like the backing vocals have been listening to Soft Machine's "We Did It Again". Faust's Jean Hervé Néron makes a brief appearance blasting trumpet and French horn on the nose part of "Sœur Valérie".

The D-Construction EP consists of three remakes of tracks from Ulan Bator's first three albums. If there was a good deal of melodic content before, well there isn't much now. Oromo Trondheim retains a little punchy Bator bassline, and their hooks on layer upon layer of distortion, just as does San-Ho's P's sampled shakery arpeggios and the plangent strains of Krou shakery's sampled solo. Scanner adopts a more subdued approach, a meandering, click-shrouded in special grooves. On his mix, Erik H switches from throbbing rhythms and overheated density to soothing nose drones. Finally, Carl Sone's hectic, wireheaded collage turns Bator's guitars into Eugene Chadbourne. So so.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Judith Weir

A Night At The Chinese Opera

WEC 0200 CD

Weir's early opera is captured in a live recording of the brilliant 1999 Glasgow performance by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Andrew Parrott, which captured the work's quirky delights. Suffused with her characteristic ironic humour and satire, Weir's 1987 opera is a story of tyranny and resistance featuring her own libretto. The story line originated in a 14th century Chinese play. The Chao Family

Orchestrator, about a loyal subject of the emperor who is falsely accused of treason by a wicked general. He commits suicide and his child is unbeknownst to both of them, adopted by the general, when the child grows up and discovers the truth he exacts revenge. This is the kind of murky tale that appeals to Weir. She has said that she looks for texts with "a sort of fustiness about them an 'ambiguity' which allow the music itself to provide a layer of interpretation. This is certainly how the text comes across in Chinese Opera, the action often heavily stylised and cross-cutting

different genres. The original ending is changed. Chao's attempt at revenge fails and he is executed, but the original story line is echoed by a play within a play with a happier ending performed by some travelling players against the backdrop of darker events.

Weir's musical style, with its oblique use of tonality, is colourful and alluring, but also very detached and unromantic. It could be described as postmodern, if that term hasn't been emptied of meaning. At any rate, the music certainly isn't dissonantly modernist. But there is a lot going on beneath the beguiling surface, and all is hardly as it appears. Senior Paul Griffiths has described her pieces as "beautiful things that cannot be traced". The performances by baritone George Thomas as Chao and countess-Tenor Michael Olanick as the Military Governor were especially characterful. The only questionable touches are the broad accents and humming-up of the actors in the play within a play. *A Night At The Chinese Opera* is a captivating musical experience created by the most individual British composer of her generation.

ANDY HAMILTON

White Out with Jim O'Rourke

Drunk Little Mass

ECSTATIC PLACES #968 CD

In their first incarnation, White Out were a tumult of percussion and tortured keyboards. *Drunk Little Mass* is their second recording for Ecstatic Places, and the first since losing percussionist David Russ to his full-time role in The No-Black Blues Band. That still leaves the surviving duo a percussionist in Tom Surgal and keyboardist in Cuthbertson. All the tracks are live improvisations with no overdubs recorded in New York. Freeform electronics dominate the time, but Cuthbertson's dissonant synth — grinding child-sample melodies that bring to mind some of Sun Ra's solo wigs-out — keeps things more jazz than Merzbow. Surgal plays a lot augmented with gongs and percussive devices, while Jim O'Rourke, guesting on four of the six tracks, brings up the nose with guitar and Powerbook.

Their genre, slightly tongue-in-cheek electronic manipulations bring to mind the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The lack of sophistication is endearing. The atmosphere significantly alters only when O'Rourke moves onto guitar, suspending single, ringing notes high above the murky pulse of electronics. When he starts to pick a slow, desolate blues Surgal draws a high-pitched whistle out of his percussion from behind the slow wheeze of muffled electronics, and Cuthbertson breaks into long moans and cries. Elsewhere, the electronics are more self-consciously cosmic, recalling the great distortions of works of the Krautrock period or the apocalyptic 50-f of MIV's *Leave The City*. Even so, as a way of comic book soundtrack to the end of it, it's an absolute no-brainer.

DAVID SHERMAN

the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

After Dinner nap; Haco



Japanese Prog awaits: **After Dinner** made quite a splash in British event rock circles when they performed at London's ICA in 1987. "The kind of show that should send delirious ripples up and down the third body of pop," wrote an excited *Mark Sinker*, back in his *NME* days. The Japanese group's "foreign debut" LP, *After Dinner* (1984), lived up to that live promise. Perhaps inevitably, 1989's *Parade Of Replicas/Parade Of Riemers* (Detector/ReR Musicop/RERAD2 CD) fell short of its predecessor, but not by much. Although the sound design seems a bit too polished, the neo-classical surges a touch inflated, and the flirtation with reggae on "Frontal Mermad" ill-advised, there's colourful use of Japanese instruments and scattered nose-diving to break up the linear flow and keep the listener guessing. And the tunes are pretty catchy too, even if vocalist Haco and the jerky rhythms do sound like Sparks now and again. Tacked on to this reissue are four labouring remixes by Pascal Plantings, Tette Thometz, Sesi (Hanna) and Sami Beninati and Joshua McKay, none of which matches the transcendent beauty and economy of *After Dinner*'s own arrangements.

While critics have never been gungy about using that favourite hack's cliché "bimbal," it is safe to say that **Almendra** was one of the three or four groups who introduced rock music to Argentina in the late 60s. Seminal! The compilation *Inmundo* (South American Psychedelic Masterworks) (Agradados Discos ADD763 LP) calls highlights from their two self-titled albums from 1969 and 70 – the latter is often considered a masterpiece of South American psych. The quartet consisted of the twin lead guitars of Luis Albert Spinetto and Edelmo Molinari and the rhythm section of Carlos Emilio Del Guercio and Rodolfo Gerice. A feeling of epicurean abandon coheres this diverse collection and pins together a groovy stew which our 21st century sensibilities might crazily label as funk, boogie, blues or psych. Indeed, Almendra can feel like all things at once, with guitar slides and errant drumsticks, double-bass electric growls and, if you squint hard enough, the rhythmic combo can get tight like a forgotten Sex side Wild. Organic solos collide above the unified fray as though Zappa's "Apparaphie" was a design for life

rather than a cute little song. By the album's end, it's a certified shame that Almendra is celebrated only in their native Argentina.

Uruguay's **Los Shakers**, on the other hand, are largely of historical interest. On the evidence of the *Por Favor!* (Big Beat International CDWIKD21) CD) compilation, they were rather wishfully tagged "The Beatles del Río de la Plata", though their flat-top harmony-drenched ballads were an undoubtedly enthusiastic, if unimaginative local response to the global impact of their heroes. The earlier, straighter material from their 1965 album *Los Shakers* and 1966's *Shakers For You*, plus accompanying singles, just about kept within earshot, but *The Beatles* coming over all weird after *Almendra* left these Uruguayans acolytes lagging hopelessly behind. Weighted down with silly psychedelics and americana, the songs from 1968's *La Conferencia Sinfónica Del Puro Bar* are as tedious as the title.

First released in 1996 and now reissued to coincide with London Tate Britain's major retrospective **Jah Wobble's** *The Inspiration Of William Blake* (3D Heretic/Al Saints ASCD29 CD) is a real stunner. Wobble's Cockney-accented recitations and arrangements are by turns highly imaginative (the Eastern tones colouring some settings) and comically clumsy. Either way, the balance feels exactly right for capturing the eternal outsider appeal of London's most visionary artist and poet.

The Agency (Rectangle RECE2 CD) is a reissue of **Eugene Chadbourne's** gloriously chaotic 1966 vinyl LP of collaborations with his daughters and others. The album opens with some instrumental covers including Ornette Coleman's exhilarating "Peace Wailers", played by three multitracked Eugenes (The Eddie Chadbourne Trio). His daughters Molly and Lucy bring up Sucky, rap and rock 'n' roll in their ebullient renditions of "Everybody Loves A Nut" and the feminist anthem "We Don't Need The Men." There's also a harmonic noise jam with some Mexican improvisers set against a tape loop by Henry Kaiser, three or four different backing groups, domestic musique

concrete tapes, the album crisscrosses with a version of Phil Spector's "Canons Of Christianity".

Named as one of the 100 records that should have set the world on fire (*The Wire* 175), **Buffy Sainte-Marie's** 1969 album *Illusions* (Vanguard 793002 CD) was a weird, wired one-off that embedded her songs in soundholes early edged with electronics sourced from her powerful tremolo voice and guitar. On tracks like Leonard Cohen's "God Is Alive, Magic Is A Foot" and her own "The Dream Tree", she took acid folk on a darker trip through primal deep forest tales of vampirism and the supernatural.

Much of **Gobin's** soundtrack for George A Romero's *Down Of The Dead*, produced by Italy's legendary wizard of stylish gore, Dario Argento, never made the final American cut. *Gobin's* 20th anniversary special edition CD, originally released in 1998, contained just about everything the group recorded to accompany the *Living Dead* on their cannibalistic foraging around a North American mall. It has now been reissued in an elegantly slimmed down version on vinyl only (Diagreed RED1171 LP). Wicked Santeira rhythms mixed with player pianos, baroque mandolins and crepuscular symphonies, plus some infectious disco-Pop stomping make this a welcome resound, even without the nightmare-inducing gorefest sleaze showing a wave of stargazed zombies open-mouthed with lust.

A "Middle-Class White Boy," as one of his songbirds had it, **Almendra** opened up the blues, Country and jazz to two 1965 Trio sessions for Atlantic. Live and studio respectively. *More Alive! Wild Man On The Loose* (Warner Jazz 8122754392 CD). The truly humorous lyrics – most songs here are originals, though Willie Dixon, Jimmy Rogers and Buddy Johnson are also featured – are rendered in that inimitable non-singing singing style. His piano playing is less discussed – a rooted-in boogie, it's actually as original as it is strange. *Reviewed by Chris Blackford, Phil England, Andy Hamilton, Ken Holings, Hua Hui and Bob Kopf*

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in brief avant rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

Amber Asylum The Supernatural Parlour Collection

RELEASE 09/04/03 CD

Amber Asylum is a project based around composer, multi-instrumentalist and soprano vocalist Kris Force. Back when she was merely *Che* she contributed cells to Swans' majestic *Soundscores For The Blind* and while Amber Asylum never quite scale those delirious peaks, *The Supernatural Parlour Collection* boasts a similarly austere grandeur. Black neo-classical arrangements—very European in feel—go against haunting new songs which, coupled with the cover photographs of barren buckled trees (bringing to mind the tempestuous furies of Germany's great Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich) lend the collection a vaguely articulated air of mystical terror. Pizzicato cello and minimal percussion keep the music cold and tight with unreleased energies only punched at the last minute thanks to an overly lush, almost hysterical take on Black Sabbath's "Black Sabbath" which only confirms the original's minimalist genius.

Bride Of No No BONN Appetit!

ATLANTIC 04/04/03 CD

Bride Of No No's mysteriously masked bassist and vocalist Azota was formerly of The Sizzor Girls, who made some beautifully wrong No Wave noise in the mid-80s. Bridget Azota sees her in more conventionally rocking territory, even though it was produced by Jim O'Rourke at Chicago's Acme Studios. Bride Of No No's dynamic is classically fractured, dealing in the same jolly fucked-up equations of proto-metal-rockers like Turnmills Water, changing gears on a penny with a restless sense of propulsion. But Azota's vocals are just too zany stylized to ever allow you to genuinely engage with the music. It's such a self-conscious performance that the only thing you're encouraged to take is a shot of stoking in the sedatives: marvelling and clapping. Duh... can't at least roll my eyes?

Endgame Catalytic Unit

INTERMISSION 1/0043 2XCD

Nothing at all to do with Samuel Beckett; although a visit to their Leicester record store Ultra Tube is certainly a Beckettian experience! Endgame is in fact the Kosmische pseudonym of the Freeman brothers, renowned Krautrock experts and authors of the ever entertaining German rock bible, *The Crack In The Cosmic Egg*. Doubt as you may doubt expect: is a colossal CD full of meditative vaguely New

Age synth washes, acid guitar and trummings of cheery ethnic percussion all jammed out in real time. Although it never rises above the level of pastiche, it fills a neat hole in a month without any Tangerine Dream releases. As I was just about to say but they beat me to it with their self-description: "A step aside from Lightwave to Antimew. 70s French electronics or Agitation Free's soundpools."

Gilgamesh Arriving Twice

LINERNOTE BLUE 1/040 CD

Founded by keyboard/composer Alan Gowen in 1973, Gilgamesh have pretty complex relations with Canterbury's mythos as well as crucial links to England's nascent free jazz scene. Gowen spent some time in a pick-up group for legendary free abode Joe Harriott and as a member of the short-lived Improv Unit. Sunship alongside a pre-King Crimson Jamie Muir. Before going on to play a key role in National Health. Gilgamesh could also boast future members of both Black Sabbath (Steve Nouri) and Joe's Soft Machine (Steve Cook). However, as anything more than a historical curiosity, *Arriving Twice*—a collection of previously unreleased recordings spanning 1973–75—doesn't add to much. Gilgamesh have that same subtly lyrical brainy art that effectively neutered so much Canterbury output without any of the endearing pastoral foolishness of contemporaries like Egg or Caravan. The 1973 demos provide the only real live, with guitarist Phil Lee manhandling fuzztone as dramatically as Robert Fripp but the later stuff just sounds like stale BBC2 leasid music.

Gerald Hawk King Of The River

CRANE PRODUCTION 04/0004 CD

Hawk's obscure whippers broadcast through a thick fog of wahwah and late night psychos, occupy the same border zone as Alexander 'Skeet' Spencer's corned beef 1968 tour. One that's come courtesy of The Sun City City ever obscure. Addiction moment further lends the sessions an element of drugged paranoia; not a million miles away from the warped evangelical casting of solo Greg Allen Bishop's *Alvinus B* project. Indeed, all the SCG's pet obsessions are present and correct, debounced Country folk on every second, buzzing percussive acoustics and eschatological yomim delivered via darkhaired nursery rhymes in a cadence that's almost Biblical. The fact that his Website (www.geraldhawk.com) consists of

three blurry photos of Easter Island suggests he is well versed in the SCGs track covering mythmaking.

Hockenheit Omnia 44bolab/

400 Boys 04/ADCOM 000002 CD

The 400 Boys are the mythical Mayan bassists responsible for saving chaos and debauchery throughout the world. True to the title, the Hockenheit burner raises the stakes in an ecstatic celebration of all things Dinosaur. 400 Boys loses the electronics that defined their debut CD in favour of evocative folk trance with guitar, bass, Hammond and drums, bolstered by finger cymbals, Tibetan drums and a buzzing reed instrument from Thailand. Steven Wray Lobell of *Loudside Faust* and the Dave Redford Trio, once again mans the mooring dock, beautifully backlighting all the celebratory jamming.

Melt Banana Teeny Shiny 4 249

PL 000000 04

Melt Banana are Jason's finest exponents of that manic cut in such style that monies detourous flashes of turntable manipulation, big bombs of fuzz and noise, and a surreal hardcore rock aesthetic that gives the nod to both Minor Threat and The Residents. *Teeny Shiny* is a self-released LP self-described as "pop and nice" even as it is most deliriously nerdy: the opener, "Free The Bee" sounds like Primal Scream's "Kowalski" tackled by a gang of over-enthusiastic straight edgers, while "Third Attack" comes over like been instant Bs pummeled by digital Hardcore. "Moon Flavour", a breathless take on bubblegum Metal caps a manic set.

nl3(trio) Part One-Part Two

PROHIBIT RECORDS 2/003 CD

The shadowy French trio combines samplers, tape loops, shortwave radio guitars, bass and drums in a series of free improvisations. In a kind of test you'd swear these were intricately mapped compositions, as across the span of two CDs the group moves from angular songforms that sound like a more polite fugues through some darker, Gothic territories, largely down to Nicolas Lefebvre's approximation of The Doors. Robbie Kruger's sandy guitar playing. It is too nice to hear that the group's aesthetic was formed while creating live soundtracks to experimental shorts at Paris's La Grenouillère Francis De Chaillet. They're keen that both discs are seen as recyclable material, encouraging any would-be soundclashers to dig deep into their material. Good luck to em.

Poem Rocket Psycho-

geography ATLANTIC 04/0123 CD

NYC power trio Poem Rocket's second album *Psychogeography* hanks back to the

New York noise of the late 60s, referencing the likes of Thula Zadek's *Live Skull* and 'Expressway'era Sonic Youth. While vocalist Sandra Gardner's soft breath often recalls Kim Deal's tenure as a Pixie, Poem Rocket are more obsessively rhythmic, and minimally anchored than any of their heroes. It's a beautifully recorded set, with the bassist often taking the lead melodic role, leaving guitar and tape loops to spin off all sorts of ragged tangents.

The Red Krayola Blues.

HOLLERS & PLEAS 04/01/01 0190 CD

The Red Krayola were the original idiosyncratic outfit, the one that launched a thousand haphazardly looking ships. That they later gained so much self-conscious baggage and promptly sunk doesn't detract from the totally engaging bliss that was their first two LPs. The six track EP *Blues Hollers & Pleas* is a felt reflection of founder Mayor Thompson's working strategy—namely, armoire songforms belted out by shapely, armoire phrasing and the occasional electronics. These elements are entrusted and presaged into the service of some elusive goal. If you're a truly armoire songster—as Thompson most certainly is—better to stick with non-musicians to keep things unpredictable and interesting. Despite yourself.

Scenic Spheris

SPHERIS FOUNDATION INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS 04/00001 CD

Slow marching through the Mojave desert, Scenic are led by guitarist Bruce Lucher formerly of *Savage Republic*, who exerts a covert but far reaching influence on all America. *Savage Republic* created eerie hymns to dead flags well before Godspeed You! Black Emperor! and their early releases pioneered the use of the embossed hardback sleeves, pressed by Lucher on an antique handletter press, as taken up by Tortoise, Shellac, June Of 44, etc. Scenic follow in *Savage Republic*'s footsteps, playing instruments of deep cinematic scope. A primer for their forthcoming album, *Spheris* incorporates more electronics and keyboards, adding an otherworldly quality to Scenic soundtracks.

UBIK Mikrotium BPH/UBIK RECORD

RELEASE 04/01/03 CD

"Featuring Sterling Rowell of 'Spacemen 3' is a bold thing!" send you scurrying down Spacemen LP credits, only to discover he took photos on *The Perfect Obsession* and played percussion on *Performance*. Named after a Philip K Dick novel, UBIK combine godfukky baggy beats with rudimentary samples, referencing stuff like Suicide's "Rocket USA". They're also members of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts, where ex-Spacemen collaborators probably go to retire. It may be getting pretty crowded up there.

in brief classical

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

Paul Barker Turquoise Swans

SATJAY001 520815 CD
British composer Paul Barker wrote Three Songs For Sylvia, orchestral settings of poems by Sylvia Plath for Sarah Leonard in 1994. The mid-price 31 minute disc features the version for soprano and piano played by the composer. Also included are arias from Barker's chamber opera Dirty Trills and even settings of Archaic poetry Barker's engaging, jazzy rhythms and rich harmonies, plus Leonard's awareness of popular styles, make this a song recital with wider appeal.

Morton Feldman/Stefan Wolpe For Stefan: Wolpe now

WOLPE001 520810 CD
New World takes a small step back from promoting seldom heard composers, with Morton Feldman's clear dedication to his teacher Stefan Wolpe. For chorus and two violas. The two new interminable vignettes through the vibes sustain into the voice parts. Like other works from Feldman's last decade — he died in 1986 — For Stefan Wolpe is long with minimalist repetition apparently influenced by the patterns in Persian carpets which he had begun to collect. Shorter pieces by Stefan Wolpe (1902-72) are Two Chinese Epitaphs for chorus and percussion violent responses to the bombing of Guernica in 1937 and the later, tonal Four Pieces For Mixed Chorus. A thoughtful programme movingly interpreted.

Karl Amadeus Hartmann

Concerto Funebre 10M 170 CD
Karl Amadeus Hartmann
Symphonies 1-8 10M 170 123 123 CD

Hartmann (1905-63) was a major German composer, much of whose music awaits

rediscovery or even discovery. After the war he was renowned as a leader of the "musical resistance" to the Nazis and his music has a protest character. The EPM set, with Metzgermeister conducting the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra offers the complete symphonies which were finished after the war, though all apart from the last two drew on pre-war compositions. The ECM disc featuring The Munich Chamber Orchestra has the first recording of the colourful Chamber Concerto for clarinet, string quartet and orchestra. The Fourth Symphony is in more modernist vein (Hartmann was a progressive who rejected serialism) and both ECM and EPM discs offer fine interpretations of a highly expressive work.

Hanspeter Kyburz Multitonic

KABOS001 01712134M CD
Born in Nagena of Swiss parents in 1950 Kyburz is a name new to me. The Keros release features three works from the last decade. Multitonic, for large orchestra in four groups is performed by The SWR Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hans Zender. Kyburz has gone one up on Stockhausen's Gruppen and the whiplash effect is of course equally multiplied in stereo, the music coming across as pretty intricate, and not very pretty. The Vaychir Cyber Manuscript for mixed choir with Klangforum Wien takes as its subject a still underexplored medieval manuscript, the percussive and often harsh Parts for that ensemble alone completes a disc that's a tough listen.

Ian Mitchell The Edge Of The World

BLACK BOX 001 520811 CD
Mitchell was inspired to take up bass clarinet when he heard Eric Dolphy's solo recording of "God Bless The Child". He is now one of its leading classical proponents. The

programme here, mostly from the last decade, could be described as post-Cornelius Cardew British experimentalism. Mitchell's huge tone is apparent from the first track. Cardew's virtuosic solo piece Mountains (1977), Christopher Hobbs's 17 One-Minute Pieces is a period piece, often jazzy or light accompanied by cheery Casio organ. On John Whitley's characteristically despatched A Little Souvenir, bass clarinet and a strangely distant piano don't overlap until the coda.

Mark Pilschier Automatik

APML 001 01706512 CD
Precocious Mark Pilschier — who first heard Stockhausen's Gesang Der Junglinge at eight years old — rejects complaints about concerns of pure electronic music, asserting "When a piece which is composed and produced in multi-channel form is played in a concert hall, it is one of life's great pleasures." In this sense, of course, the stereo CD version of the multidimensional Automatik is a reduction. But like 19th century piano versions of symphonic music, we get some idea of the composer's remarkable achievement. The piece comes dramatically alive in 4 Sektor, where the intense concluding 9 Sektor begins with an unassuming piece of electronics, before a glorious efflorescence of sounds. Each section, which segues into the next, has a distinct concept behind it. Pilschier's abstract approach compares with Bernard Parmegiani on the almost symphonic De Natura Sonorum — that Automatik stands comparison is high praise indeed.

Chris Prosser Pacific

WPRO1 224 CD
A varied and engaging set of pieces for Scordatura violin — that's the instrument in a non-standard tuning. Prosser has strung his violin with hard steel strings across a high bridge to produce an intense sound rich in harmonics. He was born in England but lived half of his life in New Zealand, and these pieces were recorded after a visit there. A lot of the interest is rhythmic, with many folky,

dance-like movements, and also complex metres that produce a tumbling effect. On some tracks Prosser sings along or vocalises. The recording is rather busy but the effect is often haunting.

Wolfgang Rihm Geygige Form

KAROS 001 017024M CD
Wolfgang Rihm Thine KAROS
The prolific German composer, born 1948, studied with Stockhausen but aimed to reintroduce expressivity into the post-war avant garde. This features a set of pieces, composed from 1972 onwards, for various tripartite instrumental line-ups, in A-flat for viola, cello and bass explores the kind of tonal sounds more associated with Rihm's older compatriot Helmut Lachenmann, and Hazeau features, according to liner notes, Angelika Geygige Form is a disc of music for chamber ensemble — here Klangforum Wien — including the highly kinetic Sinner To Be Broken (by the conductor) from 1983, which takes its title from the score of Edgard Varese's Arcana. Rihm is certainly a merciless writer on music. After explaining how Geygige Form from the Geygige Form disc, is "a compact sign, not deciphered", he concludes, "But these are thoughts that must come to me now for the programme booklet. They are wrong".

Hans Tutschku Moment

EMMENT 001 520811 CD
In contrast to Mark Pilschier's disc of pure electronic music reviewed above, the German composer Hans Tutschku gravitates closer to the concrete tradition, despite his associations both with Rihm's Stockhausen and Rihm's Externsteine/Lantemes (1996) uses recordings of city sounds from South East Asia. The more concentrated, unified Immersion ("Memento", also 561) reflects a recent concern with speech as the basis for acoustic transformations and uses granular synthesis to break sounds into their constituent elements and reassemble or stretch them. Highly recommended. (.)



It's important to remember that despite Braxton's compositional on/off, the motivating factors behind the music and the formal plus that hold it together — it is, as Braxton intended of along, music that emerges from the particular combination of musicians. George Lewis is one of Braxton's favorite collaborators, for reasons that should be immediately audible. Michel Richard Abrams is a rare and fascinating addition to this group. Sumner Mark Nelson and drummer Charles "Baba" Sissler have not often been documented in Braxton's music.



The Secret Museum refers to both the individual and collective experiences that all of us carry around in our daily lives. We are each a secret museum of experiences and remembrances of events once by, places that have since changed, people that are no longer with us. Music can be an excellent medium by which to express these last times and places and bring us to new places as well. Every Exist



It takes the dedication and assiduity of dedicated clinicians to make these sonic areas with needs as subtle as the ones documented on this disc... Indeed, only very few woodwind players who consider the clinician to be just one colour amongst others on their sonic palette can rival the mastery so evident in these "yellow paper", a golden hour in the annals of clinician playing — and of contemporary music beyond category.



in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Atmos Grounded, an EP (12) The NYC duo of MC Prawn and producer E Moss follows up "Watch The Skies" their first debut from last year. The Grounded EP begins with "Multiple Connotations," an anagrammatic riff on "MC" because to Prawn, MC means "faking you chose like Mario Cass." "Coming more consistently than masturbation contests," "Conquering men like Casanova has controlled mankind Chino" and "Controlling like men's commodities." Elsewhere, Prawn imagines what basic Atmos would have sounded like if he was a rapper. Meanwhile, E Moss makes like Homer on the "magnum dopus 4 By 4," a sprawling cinematic journey through Manhattan's alleyways. Most of the time when someone underground comes with the orchestral style it usually means that he's just waiting to be discovered by Madonna. Here, however, the symphonic shit is strictly streetwise, paradoxically gritty and destabilizing.

Cosmodrome Mimum Complex (LP) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) You've got to admire an electronic group that proudly has a Gaster Institute of Technology logo: the Banzai. It's the second album from tongue-in-cheek French hussies Marseaux Schoener, Hoffmeyer and Cammer, and it's every bit as groovy as their debut, *Procession Pour Line Conclusion Musculo Au Viergeuse Seck*. If you were curious you could complain that they've come up with largely the same processors at the beginning of the 21st century, but their punky electro snorts, spurs and salsas with requisite style, while dancerlike killers "Dissonance" and "Paroid" stomp all night and tolerance Harold fucker! If/they/er.

Imaginary Visions Texas Rummy (LP) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Another ragged from the deep funk underground. With Philippe Lehman's Soul Fire and Disco labels groups like Sugarman 3 and Ambrosio, Gabriel Ricks' "Anatomy Of A Heavy Funk 45" how-to articles in *Rip Daily* and now Rob Darg's Deep Funk label, perhaps, panderingly recasting the void of forgotten midwest encrusted records salvaged from the raucous of rats and roaches looks set to be the year's underground cause celebre. Whatever you think about the movement's views on authenticity and real black music, you've got to admire their dedication not to mention their willingness to put their money where

their mouths are. God knows who The Imaginary Visions are, but they do a mean 1971-era garage hit, even if the recordings' cleanliness gives the game away.

J Majik The Lizard/Matchbox (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Use the Shy FX 12" below the intro and the breakdown of "The Lizard" reimagined drum in bass with some Old School touches. Beginning with ticking drums that sound slightly off time, some Doom FX and processed vocals, "The Lizard" then unwraps an intense raw keyboard riff escalating to delirium. Then the same old, same old drum that it's pretty great for a minute or two. The flip "Matchbox" is like a drum in bass mix of an old controlled bleeding record.

Roger Joseph Manning Jr & Brian Reitzell Logan's (LP) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Various Artists Soul Ecstasy (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) These two alone, unwashed soundtracks from the 70s courtesy of the fine folks at Emperor Norton, have been out for a while in the US but just made their way over here. Logan's Sanctuary is allegedly the long lost sequel to Logan's Run, but the bang-on retro-riff soundtrack by the people behind The Moog Cookbook and Redd Kross should tell you that this is a perfectly executed hater put-on. The bacolor of rainbows Moog lines and studio hack guitar solos put in the requisite Toronto Expanding Head Band touches, while tracks like "Pleasure Dome 12" sound like Hot Butter's Soul Free jamming with Aka BB in the Moonraker.

Soul Ecstasy meanwhile is "the work of ex-ABA basketball player Fulton James who may or may not have bombed an Orange Julius franchise in Sacramento" very funny, and so is the "soundtrack" made by such legends as Ricardo Tufes, Paul Garcia and Jim Reddick: it's a just-about perfect stoned-out parody of a blaxploitation score, even if there is no with-chase theme.

Peaches The Teaches Of Peaches (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) **Peaches & Gonzales** Red Leather EP (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Peaches is a one woman show. Canadian rapper/chaussee Merrill Necker performs her sexy, sexy Teaches alone with a Roland MC-505. Borrowing shamelessly from Suicide, her debut release consists of

dirty talk over dusty electro beats with graceful, simple analogue melodies and the occasional punk guitar riff. Concerned with expressing sexuality from a female perspective, she sums the macho sexual predator versus female reproductive structure on its head using "not without humour" lines like "I'm only A4 thinking 2000" and "Oh show me what you've got/Ride a oganist my thigh" (I bet you'd snort like that the average male sexual peak comes at the age of 18 and a woman at 35. Peaches is here to celebrate hers).

Gonzales is a Canadian-born Jewish rapper living in East Berlin. *Red Leather* brings him and Peaches together in a sweet duet blending funk, hip-hop, lounge and electro. Unfortunately their good intentions about cross-fertilizing styles result in a goofy, directionless mess lacking the power and potency of Peaches's solo teachings. (Anne-Hélène Nesté)

J Rawls Check The Clock (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Check The Clock features J Sands and Grip Lava trying to rap their way through some William Orbit style synth fog. The result is elegant Hip-hop, perhaps not surprising considering Grip Lava's brother Pete Rock gave us the ultimate Hip-hop elegy "TROY (I Remember Over Your Far Away is similarly opened and left for away, but features the perfect Aka B Fly Emcee and P's Complex having a long distance affair in the studio).

Shy FX Nuttah Versus Bambata (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Mixing together UK Apache's Jungle breakthrough "Original Nuttah" with Shy FX's own (he also produced "Nutnut") drum in bass sawer, Bambata is totally retrograde, lazy, complacent even. But it's also totally joyful, raucous and migrating — precisely what drum in bass hasn't been for three years. On the flip, T-Power drags Apache's vocals through some cyber Gothic electro wailer for the breaks in beats crowd.

T-Love QMS/Witch Bitch (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) (MCA) Previously known for the great "Nobody Knows My Name" and for running the Pickenberry label which released Jurassic 5's second breakthrough EP, LA ex-pat T-Love hooks up with The Herbaliser's Glee Seaba Dynamic Synopses's Johnny Cuba and My Banga impresses Beyond There for this fine 12". Produced by Teeba and Cuba, QMS' is based on layers of guitar stats and is seriously hot. Perhaps too hot, because T-Love's precise action gets lost in the funk groove. "Witch Bitch" swings just as righteously, but the piano starts give T-Love more room to quote Woodie's adlibs from the 70s.

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in brief hiphop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

Aceyalone Accepted Eclectic

RECORD ALBUMS: 5047045 CD/LP

By the man who rhymed too fast, World-class cosmonaut Aceyalone has built and destroyed rap trends for nearly a decade now, but to write little material fanfare. Though he's not really in it for the brag, Acey's newest gets awfully philosophical about a career plagued by brags, scrapes and unreciprocated genius. Heads weren't ready for 1998's masterful *The Book Of Human Language*, so Aceyalone slows matters down a tad here in the new millennium. Returning to what he does best, bouncy skit-backs like "Five Feet" and "Rappers Rappers Rappers" flip the tired swagger into an inventive new way. Commissioning outside production work, LA kings like Evidence, Joey Chavez and Fat Jack keep the sound zesty and toothy. He pushes the tempo and brings in the ballet on the excellent "Accepted Eclectic," a track that could pass as an out take from his 1996 solo debut *All Balls*.

Boom Bop Doo Doo Breaks

1475446 CD/LP

Producer/DJ Boom Bop's theme-heavy *Circle* collaboration with Dose One was one of the year's more bizarre releases, schizophrenically shifting booby Bess one moment and stadium guitars the next. Luckily, his duo did a lot more pleasurable. For a producer who names his beats "More Fabulosity" or "Eyes Eating From Diane Musson's Hand," Boom Bop's first foray into the lucrative rhythm market is surprisingly restrained. Like a good DJ Premier or DITC instrumental, Boom Bop's loungey production can make for good listening with or without lyrical accompaniment. "11 14" fuses *Shrek* with wack with a surging rhythm section, a socky keyboard finding the groove every few bars. Confuse yourself enough and you'll swear the palatial vacationing feel of "Dingle Berries" was stolen from Air. Also check "Charles II" and "Gate Of Gargues" for basslines that sneeze their way down through your ears and on into your hips.

Buck 65 Map Overboard

AB0015 CD/2LP

The man who gives beat tips to Beanie and calls "double double" on the Beastie Boys returns with one of the most wrenching HipHop albums ever recorded. Following his unusual single "The Centaur" (huge pens as metaphor for fame), Buck's newest album is a moving collection of racist sketches, odes to his late mother

and discarded phone messages. Rhyme was Buck's therapist on *Map Overboard*, an album he supposedly locked himself in his room to record shortly after his mother's passing. He voice sits along like a hermit teenager, though it never actually sounds spry or youthful. Even when he's play-acting optimism—"Can't wait till the day when I ride around in motor cars/ Wear short-sleeved shirts and all I ate a chocolate bar"—Buck still comes across as weary, tattered, and low despite his young age. His boasts are frequent, and childish but never backed by ego, like when he thumps his chest and brags that he's "bigger than a moth fart." As he mourns his mother, Buck seems like an ex-beatnik realizing he won't so tough after all, only now he has to be.

MF Grimm & MF Doom MF

88000012 CD/LP

One of HipHop's most morose figures, MF Doom (often known as Zev Love X) first debuted in the early 1990s with Native Tongue here KMD. After his brother Subroc's untimely death in 1994, Zev returned in 1999 trying with crap Bop pop samples and pecking at scabs as PF Doom with the jaw-dropping self-produced *Operation Doomsday*. Here he splits sides with fellow metallah muthafunkin' Grimm on this team-up of two troubled HipHop outcasts. Doom's productions are grim and unique. He nearly gives a heart attack to his *Ministry* Island Czar guests on "No Snakes Alive," what starts as an innocent, angular rhythm slowly opens and accelerates. As the horns cortically tick up for each chorus, Ghosia, Grimm and Rodan are pining to stay apace. DJ "Imposad," he combines Marley Marl boom with a swayed, sultry chorus from a long forgotten 1980s quiet storm hit. Doom warns Peter Dinklage about sinners and prophets in legend and the *Iron Man* Bunch. "Struckdown in legend and totally posed, Grimm doesn't give much of a fuck either. His side is a little more conventional with choppy piano, dead Coast drums and wheezy piano playing host to his deranged "I'm dead on" line like *Koolhaas* from *The Wonder Years*," he claims on "Dedicated." And rather depressing HipHop anti-anthem, brother Grimm concludes "Dedicated" with the observation "Life isn't short, death is so fucking long."

Micranets Obelisk Monument

SHIBERS 55993 CD/2LP

Obelisk Monument is the debut from I Self and Koolhaas (an impressive interlouter space exploration of 21st century

Microcentricity and giddy error I Self yells at the sony microphone like a pissed off, sweeter Divine Styler. Lyrics edgy with paranoia and egged by racism, he takes to the high road in search of human salvation, for ways to "release ch" ("Exodus") and neanmate lost obelisk. His gravel-gruff flow sits with Koolhaas's production like finger-nail-bangs on a fused fist. Akem's boom-bop production is just on deep, weighty drum kicks and snappy snares. Though they get local over 18 tracks, it's heartening to see an intelligent crew improve on staid indie formalism with their unique take on "religious, tongue culture" ("The Willie Lynch").

Push Button Objects with

Del, Mr. Lif & DJ Granz 3600

CHOCOLATE RECORDS/007012 12

Five agent lyrists Del, The Funky Homosapien and Mr. Lif join the Push Button team and composer Granz for this batty portrait of four-pronged funk. Departing from their usual electro-disco the duo constructs a sleekly bare rhythm out of a chopped bass and brassy percussion. Granz steps in and summarily reduces it with stronger scratches that hit the ground crawling but ride lightning by chorus and Lif is best becoming one of today's best reasons to stay motivated in words. His coffee-soaked, grungy monotone manages to sound backbeat yet urgent, as though he's trying his hardest to enunciate rhymes aloud. The Funky one is getting conscious these days and his distinctive Cali-stoner snowcone flow sits well alongside Lif's stern baritone tones. The slow-as-B-side "Breakers Delight" may confuse B-boys and girls, but it's swoonbucking serenity, funk at any speed and glassy synth's concentration on just speed.

Terracotta Troupe with Del

and DJ Z-Trip Dynasty rework.

199001 12

Terracotta Troupe is a revolving collection of artists. DJs and MCs whose 1998 Japanese EP was banned in their native Japan for its "unacceptable" references to World War II. Pearl Harbor behind them, Shing02, DJ Blk, Ryoja, Mr. Buzsaw and Capital One Transcopic figures with their Yankoo brothers Del and Bombshell. DJ Z-Trip, Terracotta produces Del on "Dynasty," an entertaining skills workout that exhibits Del's penchant for rhyming word references ("With a Pale Ale I sip the best like a Chaperade"). Deltron returns the favour by producing The Troupe on the flip track "Monsters." Shing02 warns us of the "Sakon Valley of doom" and tries his best to rope in the macho guitars and clashing first solos. It works, but check Z-Trip's "Dynasty" remix for a groovy beat roll and the less-is-more approach Z and his Bombshell associates have perfected.

in brief jazz

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

AILY Trio with Ken Vandermark *Wonder II* Was Vandermark 04247 00001 00001 CD
Corbett/Gustafsson/Holm *Kapsalis/Lonberg-Holm* Bismillah 04247 00001 00001 CD

Bassist Peter Janson and drummer Kjell Nordström provide sturdy underpinning while the reeds of Vandermark and the indefatigable Hans Gustafsson alternate between focused quest and rampage. The group floats into address to Albert Ayler. They address the traditional song "There Is A Balm In Gilead," and a piece by junior veteran Fred Anderson. Add cover artwork by another dedicatee: the late Swedish concrete poet Åke Hodeli, and it's clear that a valuable conversational spirit resides within the urgent energetic music.

Buttoss recorded in Chicago in 1996 places Gustafsson in a markedly different context, embedded among John Corbett's acoustic guitar, Fred Lonberg-Holm's cello and the volen Tom Kapsalis, and entered by a different set of precedents. The saxophone's drubbs flutes in its ascetic soundworld of tangled lines and eliptical utterances. Free improvising of a kind that suggests suave basslines and obscure communication between creatures inhabiting undergrowth.

Castle Broadway *Live* 1987 Chameleon 04247 00001 00001 CD
Field Of Sound *Field Of Sound* SOUTHERN SOUNDS 00001 00001 CD

Byard Lancaster Trio *The Byard Lancaster Trio* SOUTHERN SOUNDS 00001 00001 CD

1967 is a postal address, not a date, and the Oakland is an address in Milwaukee. Castle Broadway was painted Pete Gansky's brother, drummer Joshua Lesnek. John Wietapak on bass and John McCoy credited with "everything else" Field Of Sound is also McCoy (here spelled as McCoy, percussion and advanced sound manipulation) and Wietapak joined by Dave Getting on double bass and drummer Jon Mueller. Both groups make aluring music, with a trophy shimmer redolent of Krautrock's cult reaches. Field Of Sound drifts on the verge of the nebulous, taking patterns through haze. The piano grants Castle Broadway a more tangible centre of gravity yet the drift is still serene. A surprising song on Field Of Sound is about Byard Lancaster, who played with Arcaica in the 1990s and with Sunny Murray's quintet in the 60s. The trio album beams his saxophone and bass clarinet with Getting

and Mueller. Not exactly on a par with Tony Williams and Bill Laswell, or Murray and Alan Silva, but Lancaster holds things together across four "songs," lasting in total 23 minutes and has fun along the way.

Glucone 3 An Hour With HESLOU 04247 00001 00001 CD
 Glucone 3 lodges relatively sober improvisations of standards by the likes of Irving Berlin and Hoagy Carmichael amongst scabbling free play. Ian Bonin's drumming crystallises emphatic rhythms, then dissimulates into frantic irregularity without impairing the music's flow. Cellist Ernst Rejzger and Michael Moore here playing alto and melodic as well as clarinet, are similarly adept at alternating between smooth communication and the gritty crysis. As satisfying and as quirky as the trio's justly acclaimed earlier releases.

Christian Kviher & Peter Friis Nielsen *Play Pong* M-ART 04247 04247 00001 00001 CD

Friis Nielsen plays electric bass with the estimable Sweethearts In A Dugout. During the 1970s he recorded free jazz with groups that included saxophone Kjell who in the interim has worked with John Tchicai and explored African, Turkish and Kurdish musics. This 135 minute celebration of their reunion presents 60 pieces recorded between December 1997 and June 1999. As the title suggests, the basic format is quadruple improvisation, service and return. There's a lot more variety than that implies, with Kjell on clarinet, flutes and oboe, as well as a range of saxophones. The bass is classically inventive. Too much for one sitting, but a pleasure to dip into.

Lee Konitz & The Axis String Quartet *Play French* Impulse 04247 00001 00001 CD

Conceptually this looks decidedly dodgy: a youthful string quartet fronted by one of the outstanding soloists in jazz playing music grouped under the soft-centred heading of Impressionism. The opening bars from Konitz's alto should be enough to put such reservations on hold. Compositions are by Satie, Koehlin, Chausson, Faure, Debussy and Ravel. Arrangements, by Chad Talmor are designed to accommodate improvisation. The quartet plays discreetly, and the Konitz sound remains seductive. There are tentative passages, but also moments when all gels beautifully: crucially it avoids sounding as if a point is being made.

Richard Leigh Harris & George Haslam *Tredavoe Blue* SAM 04247 00001 00001 CD

Harris's "Goodbye Port Be Har" receives ornate treatment here, and pianist Harris regularly displays broad jazz awareness. But his playing often seems to be working instead towards transcription of certain natural processes, from droning to weathering. Haslam uses clarinet and the Hungarian tangos as well as his gulf between to bind and bolster the band's more transient evocations within ruggedly etched forms.

John Mayer's Indo-Jazz Fusions 00001 00001 00001 CD

Mayer's name is inextricably linked to that of the late Joe Harriott, his collaborator in the initial Indo-Jazz Fusions sessions during the mid-60s. With interest in the great saxophone's role high and rising, this is a shrewdly timed release. The young jazz musicians who join Mayer here aren't required to emulate the distinctive voices that elevated those original recordings, so far above the status of novel idea, but they do justice nonetheless to his graceful arrangements. The title track is by Kenny Wheeler, but most of the themes include one dedicated to trad clarinetist Acker Bolk. As by Mayer. The music no longer sounds as daring as it used to be, but it retains vivacity and elegance.

Neil Metcalfe & John Rancefort *Twogether* SAM 04247 00001 00001 CD

24 concise, instant compositions by two former members of The Spontaneous Music Ensemble. Solos and dialogues alike take shape in the moment, while appearing to the ear to follow some predetermined course. Improvisatory fluency and imagination galvanise musical language that often seems to be drawn from canonical 20th century chamber works. It's not a language that suggests conversational mimicry. Like the illusory sensus of underlying necessity, that's one of Twogether's pleasing virtues.

Anthony Ortega *Scattered* Clefide 04247 00001 00001 CD

Also veteran Anthony Ortega was recorded last July in California with Mike Wolford at the piano and Joe LaBarbera on drums. The trio plays mostly standards, but with some surprising twists and turns, which are facilitated by the absence of an anchoring bass. Ortega and Wolford give a radiant duo reading of "Body And Soul" (elsewhere, LaBarbera's lightness of touch enables him to punctuate and gloss rather than dictate). The trio uses familiar themes as springboards rather than straitjackets. Open air moods prevail, with bebop impulses transformed through prolonged exposure to bright sunlight.

Resonance Impeders At All Costs *Unknown* CPH 04247 00001 00001 CD

A trio with Bengt Kraus on alto sax, Chris Dahlgen on bass and Jay Rosen at the drums. Since their last CPH outing in 1997, Dahlgen has augmented his sound with electronics, and Rosen has extended his lot to produce less conventional percussive effects, but they are still ready to whir and churn in response to Kraus's goading basses and rages. Very strongly improving of the kind provides a touchstone for the processes of creative fermentation, and that's the real value of CPH's amply informal. Let's just see what happens next, approach.

Elliott Sharp's Terraplane Blues For Next *entire* FACILITY 04247 00001 00001 CD

Sharp is Elliott Sharp's blues modification project. Not altogether surprisingly, it's respectfully yet offcentre. He plays occasional horn sax as well as a range of guitars, alongside bassist David Hirsch, drummer Sam Cam and saxophone Sam Furnace's alto and baritone. On the second disc the quartet gets to stretch out some more. Sharp searing like a gliding roar over a mass of earthy grooves. On the last disc, Terraplane furnish vehicles for their guests Dean Bowman and Eric Marcus play soulfully, but the real coup is legendary guitarist Hubert Sumlin, who enters to great effect on "Robin & Turnbin" and "S-Boogie".

Stelon Four *In One* *Stelon Four* ACUSTICS 04247 00001 00001 CD

Muscular free playing by a quartet recorded live in Cologne at the start of 1999. Luc Houtkamp's edgy walking and guttural squalls on alto and tenor saxophones are matched in intensity by Johannes Bauer's trombone. Denny Manderscheid's double bass and Martin Burns's drums. There are sparse even introspective passages, but at its most, it's a music that's as much as a resistance rather than a defiance. An admirable performance, tough lean and effective, without ornament.

Bill Wells Trio *Innocent* PROCESSION 04247 00001 00001 CD

On a live recording from the mid-1990s, self-taught folkloric composer and outsider musician Bill Wells was heard skewering a large ensemble from behind the double bass. Here he's seated at the piano with a battery of samples to hand, working through six unassuming varieties with assistance from trumpeter Robert Henderson and Steve Jackson on harmonica and guitar. Linda Cooper adds occasional tuba. Charm builds cumulatively through these quietly obsessive sketches, but predominantly persevere through "Bad Plumbing" is raggedly propulsive.

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

Aavikko Oriental Baby

HYPNIA 016 CD

Where Barry Adamson imbued his imaginary soundtracks with tense atmospheres to explore the psychological malaise of the black experience, Finland's Aavikko simply wants to score the major chords. Oriental Baby's tremed major chords and melodic Hindi flares tumble lazily in conjunction with their uneasy sleepwalk action comedy in which a dashing Indian film star gets mixed up with the Russian Mob. Of course woodwinds ensue. Armed with only a few cheap Casio keyboards and a drum kit, Aavikko concerns the extravagant Bollywood weirdness of Vajya Ananda into an amazingly fast avant pop ditty.

Christine 23 Onna Shiny Crystal Planet

ALCANTARA ART 19 CD

The presence of Maso Yamazaki — the frightening neo technician behind Mesoma — in Christine 23 Onna (with Fusao Toido) is enough to repel the too hip and too stoned kids who only care about Rare Grooves™, thus leaving this gem of fractured psychic funk to those who had braced themselves for an apocalyptic overload of electric screams. Shiny Crystal Planet starts out with an unrelieved cover of Jerry Van Rooyen's theme to *How Short Is The Time For Love* and rockets through the more lamelaudious moments of 60s mod grooves. Trooped with phaze shifted fuzz guitar licks and space duded synths, Christine 23 Onna's untamed broadbats and peppy swing basslines make for some of the most stellar trance rock this side of Bonadoms.

Circle Andaxellx unu3u3u3

CIRCLE PROSPECTIVE UNUNU3U3 CD

Circle is the only named Person art rock collective that specialises in repetitive rock hypnotics. They employ a detached, almost scientific methodology in their work. Like the subtle shifts of a Bridget Riley Op Art painting, Circle slowly modulates intertwining layers of simple melodies for glide guitar and Moog over a constant rhythmic pulse. All of their pieces are endless grooves to nowhere spanning around the avant rock historical track: past the Krautrock transmute of Can/Neu/Faust; past the motorik aggressors in Stereolab and Pluvinet; past the neologisms of Magma; past P.O.'s schizophrenic death disc and back again to *Topo* Mogi. Andaxellx (originally on the now defunct Mesomorphics but salvaged by KUMU) is a more sedate presentation of the Circle sound. While it follows the seductive formulae of complex 4/4 rhythm

clusters and low-slung basslines, it's an album of Arctic atmospheres highlighted by the near Thomas Kenner-like frigidity of "Finitian Hushock".

Released on Frontman, Jussi Lehtimäki's Etro label, Prospekt flexes Circle's muscles to set down heavy, but equally mesmerising grooves. On previous recordings, the human voice, previously used only to utter deep non-linguistic phrases, pierces their lulling repetitions with a few choice moments of Christian Vander inspired vocal theatrics.

Stephen P McGreevy Auroral Chorus II: The Mass of the Magnetosphere

NO NUMBER CD

Stephen P McGreevy builds modest radio receivers to tune into the grand electrical storms that occur when charged particles from the solar winds interact with the earth's atmosphere. Visually, this phenomena manifests as the Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis around both polar regions, and sonically, it emits VLF radio waves throughout the earth's magnetosphere. As these radio waves can get lost in the electrostatic charges of a city's power grid, McGreevy tucks out to the middle of nowhere to record them. *Auroral Chorus II* follows his fantastic *Electric Engine* field recordings released on Itapal a few years back. McGreevy's sonic adventures have taken him deep into the Canadian wilderness where he captured beautiful, wavering tones and whistling ruses that build in density to form a chorus of electric voices. These recordings, which could easily be mistaken for the isometric investigations of Gonzo Tomlin's or the elemental poetry of Loren Eiseley. It's hard to believe that this is the sound of the Earth.

Ora Astronauts STRANGLER 1013 2013

Andrew Chalk and Damon Tate formed Ora well over a decade ago and have produced numerous self-released cassettes and limited CD-R editions of their mysterious ambience and delicate textures. In working with such prolific collaborators as Jonathan Coughton, Lou Corral, Colin Potter, Daizuke Suzuki and Michael Northam, Ora has masterfully collected a wunderkammer of drones. Each of Ora's mesmerisms possesses an elegant antiquity that eerily decays a sense of antiquity but has little context, history or structural interest. Just as a 17th century historical aesthete would hermetically hoard alchemical machines, enigmatic documents and daemonic specimens in a manner that emphasised the beauty of the object, Ora intuitively develops

their slow building drones out of aqueous field recordings, underlined magnetic fluctuations, aeolian strings and resonant metals. *Aurora* is a double LP collection of the rambles found on their self-released cassettes/CD-Rs and showcases the three distinct facets of the Ora, which parallel the distinct personalities who produced the project: specifically Chalk, Tate and studio warden Colin Potter. Inhouse ICR studio was the recording site for all of the Ora sessions. Tate's aesthetic favours the textures, especially crackly field recordings. Chalk prefers the extended metallic tone float of various recording effects, and Potter lends to both everything into a sweeping haze. Absolutely beautiful.

Troum Sets PROF ALK WACHSSTAALPAP

NO NUMBER CD

Troum mines the hidden regions of the subconscious to create waking replications of dreams. Their recordings are the gossamer residues of once vivid memories, passed through mesmeric filters to slowly dissolve present reality into soft-focus fragments of thought. Sen — Troum's contribution to Staatskapell's luminous *Porto Aux Vaches* series — is floated on the North Sea, where sheets of black ice creek under the tidal currents that roll onto a rocky beach. Troum sees no need to utter any direct references, implying their metaphors behind a bleak drone haze of guitars, bells and voice treated with a heavy dose of synthetic cathartic reverbs. Sen reveals Troum's post-industrial background with a churning drum machine which rumbles underneath the complex tonal patterns like an antiquated seismic factory.

Vibrocathedral Orchestra My Gate A Open, Tremble By My Side

ROAMING ROADS RECORDS LP

Fronted by Neil Campbell (Sunroof, A Band), Vibrocathedral Orchestra hovers just on the verge of becoming Renaissance fayre minstrels, but the drugs kick in right on time for them to forget the 14th century and lose themselves in a splendid drone stupor. The sustained chord for lots of barely amplified guitars, organs and drums sprawls across the two sides of this limited yet only recording with an innocent indifference that is ecstatic without being unnecessarily chaotic. There obviously isn't much conceptualisation or theory to this orchestra, just the triumphant gleam of turning a Germi Branca E chord only synchrony into an Eastern psychodelic free for all.

V/V/M Love Cycle WHEN OFFERED CD

Oh no. Love Sick is the latest chapter in V/V/M's continuing electronics obsessions, taking cheap shops at music's lowest common denominator — the inspired chart topping love song. V/V/M's digital repurgatorion of Lionel Richie. Rotbue

Williams and The Spice Girls (merely run through a warbling filter) are juvenile experiments designed to bring teenage girls to tears upon hearing their favourite song abused by an ill-tempered older brother. The question why? continually pops up in V/V/M's work, and on Love Sick, there is no satisfactory answer. V/V/M is fact be attempting to emulate VLF's media jamming pranks, which did include some nasty litigation over an unauthorized bastardisation of Abbie's "Dancing Queen". While V/V/M has the potential for brilliance residing within their smug personas (big bullchairs effected with mad cow disease), it has gone by the window with this uninspired album of stupidity.

Achim Wollschlaedl Shells

ROHMELL RHT 17 CD

Do you still have a fever and don't read the slowest before listening to Achim Wollschlaedl's *Shells*. Throughout his lengthy career in conceptualising, Wollschlaedl has developed a bad habit of undermining his own work by overexplaining every detail — procedural, semiotic or otherwise — which effectively kills the joy of experiencing his art. Underneath his conceptual agendas, there is a strong aesthetic instinct capable of beautiful things. *Shells* certainly qualifies. Wollschlaedl generates a crystalline network of repetitive rhythmic clicks which elegantly modulates with glissando organic patterns. I'm not going to say how it was done, but Steven Seikalyan used a similar trick on Nurse With Wounds' *Thunder Perfect Mind*.

#0 0 000 HULLAB, 000 CD

It is the mathematically inclined pseudonym for Japanese purveyor artist Nao Sakata. The name of his project refers to the multiplication of anything times zero equalling zero, thus giving you an idea of what is sonically in store on his fourth recording. His first few recordings were attempts to out-muscle Wyo head's snareware and beep constructions, with a great deal of success. Here, his minimalist achieves its purest form. With the exception of the two 1000Hz snareware first tones, which bookend this recording the tones which Sakata uses are so extreme as to be not only outside of a normal stereo speaker's frequency range, but also outside the range of human perception. His meditation on the presence of a 144Hz frequency (we only have his word for it) may have transcendental implications, but the use of an infrasonic frequency has the unintended loaded metaphor of causing hallucinatory thoughts (at its most benign) or rupturing internal organs (at its most malevolent). While this record has given me reason to dig through an old Amek analogisation with case histories on infrasonic, the inaudibility of 0000 certainly didn't do much to encourage me to ponder the metaphysics of nothingness.

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Late Junction 15

Lilo Rhydderch | Hergeilg | (Hach Tradd)
David Sylvian | Everything And Nothing | (Virgin)
Simon Jeffes | Piano Music | (Zapf)
Lester Simpson | One | (NoMaster)
Knut Reinert/Liver Kleive/Pavi Øising | Den Sjælede Dag | (Korking Kulturversted)
Michelle Makarski | Elgo Per | (Umbra) | (ECH New Series)
James MacMillan | Kiss On Wood | (Black Box)
Various | Ghed — Women Of The World | (Real World)
Amour Brahen Trio | Aszrakán Cello | (ECM)
Terje Haugen | Floating Rhythms | (Via Music)
4G | 4G | (Curling Legs)
Kelth Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack De Johnette | Whisper Not | (ECM)
Suzanne Yokota | Saluta | (Isaki)
Ensemble Ambrosius | The Zappa Album | (Big Northern Light)
Diana Boyce/JIS Bach | The Well-Tempered Klavier | (Metier)
 Compiled by **Fiona Tompkins** and **Vinny Shyne** | Late Junction, BBC Radio 3 90-93 PM | Monday - Thursday 10 PM | bbc.co.uk/3/programmes/b0000000

Reissue This! 15

Eddie Henderson | Inside Out | (Capricorn)
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Julian Priester | Love | (Love | ECM)
Music Improvisation Company | Music Improvisation Company | (ECM)
Sun Ra | Strange Strings | (Saturn)
Ray Russell | Turn Circle | (CBS)
Ray Russell | Secret Asylum | (Black Lion)
Masayuki Takayanagi | Eclipse | (Akira)
Hansford Schoof | European Echoes | (FMP)
Andrew Hill | Compulsion | (Blue Note)
Andrew Hill | Andrew | (Blue Note)
Larry Coryell | Offering | (Vanguard)
Friends | Friends | (Caroline/CDA)
Wolfgang Dauner | Output | (ECM)
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Circuit Amour 15

Various | Aphelion 2 | (Cian Analogue)
Arling & Cameron | Music For Imaginary Films | (Emperor Norton)
Sugar Ros | Agnets Byrjon | (Fat Cat)
Luciano | Vigorosity | (Force Tracks)
Jill Scott | Who Is Jill Scott? | (Hidden Beach)
Chilly Gonzales | The Entertainers | (Kitty Yo)
Mark De Clive-Lowe | Sex Degrees | (King Transmissions)
The Avalanches | Since I Left You | (Modular)
Moodymann | Forevermore | (Peacocking)

Carl Craig | Designer Music V1 | (Planet E)
Jeremy Dower | Music For Dancing Couples | (Flag Research)
Halo Prodekshams | Goat-Mind-Denish | (Seraphic promo)
Theo Parrish | Parallel Dimensions | (Sound Signatures)
Various | Irm | (Sprawl Imprint)
Various | Abstract Fusion 2 | (Track Mode)
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perMutations 15

Detron 3030 | Detron 3030 | (75 Ark)
Philer/Sugmore | I Am Happy If You Are Happy | (For 4 Ears)
Various | Schicksals Greatest Bumps | (Ninja Tune)
DJ Shadow | Entropy | (Solosolo)
Martin Tietze/Hilf/Otomo Yoshitake | 21 Situations | (Ambiances Magnetiques)
John Born Free Jazz Unit | Brown Parts | (Permutations Remote)

Fantastiele | Fantastiele | (Kronos)
Martin Tietze/Hilf/Otomo Yoshitake | Du/Ous-Je | (Ambiances Magnetiques)
Wendy Carlos | Beauty In The Beast | (East Side Digital)
Matmos/Motion | Split 1 2" | (Fat Cat)
Spring Heel Jack | Oddities | (Thirsty Ear)
Scanner | Soave | (New Electronic)
Piotr Piniowski | Split 1 2" | (Fat Cat)
Pierre Tanguay | La Musique De Mon Doque | (Ambiances Magnetiques)
Various | Harangue 1 | (Earsay)
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PC and macintosh users: Matmos

print run

New music books devoured, dissected, dissed



Giant steps: Alan McGee

My Maggie Eyes Are Hungry For The Prize: The Creation Records Story

By David Cavanagh
VERNON PRESS £11.95 Hbk

In 1988 just as a rock outfit called The House Of Love released their self-titled album on Creation Records, I wrote my first and only fan letter — to their singer Guy Chadwick. His handwritten reply to the effect that mine was the first correspondence they had so far received, elicited a follow-up in which I took it upon myself to mail the group a photocopied extract from RD Lang's *Brits Of Paradise* (I do know why). Within a couple of years, as chronicled in David Cavanagh's meticulously researched 560-page saga of Alan McGee's perpetually pecked and trouping independent label, HDL guitarist Terry Beckett described his way out of a group that had managed to rack up £10,000 a year on cabbages. In hindsight, I now wonder whether I was intuiting some bizarre fragility of mind

behind this briefly shimmering group, into whose gigs I snuck on guest lists that I knew would contain the name Robert Young (the bassist in another Creation act, Primal Scream).

My *Maggie Eyes* is a hugely ambitious work and even if, in hindsight, the musical output of Creation between 1983 and its closure in May 2000 only produced very sporadic gems, it is well worth reading for anyone interested in an insider view of the normally convulsed forces that can affect even the most underground and independent of musical operations. Cavanagh is a perceptive watcher of the music industry from 'our' side, refreshingly free from the usual frothed glebs of rockumentary. McGee comes across, as a likeable yet irresponsible character whose passion for music became increasingly entangled with a ruthless determination to win that misguided pop-industry prize, to be 'as big as The Beatles' — a goal that appears to have dozzled and dithered just about every generation since the Fab Four (as I write, British rock magazines *Melody Maker* and

Select are closing down). The tribulations McGee's label and various reappearing crows suffer on their repeated sales from Creation's Camelot make for gripping sometimes painful often supremely comical reading. Painful: House Of Love's arguments over a video they felt forced to make for \$80,000 to break in the US — it was never even shown on MTV. Hilarious: My Bloody Valentine guitarist Kevin Shields's year-on-year attempts to complete the *Loveless* LP (to the consternation of Creation employees its accumulating studio bills held up the release of other struggling artists' records), reaching its preposterous nadir when Shields was found recording his acoustic guitar in a tent.

Despite all the behind-the-scenes 'revelations', creative business plans and all under the wings of the Creation Records story Cavanagh has trojan-horsed an evocative history of the British independent music scene in the post-punk era, beginning with the formation of labels such as Postcard (lured by the delightfully misanthropic Alan Horn), Cherry Red, Geoff Travis's Rough Trade and The Television Personalities. Whaaa? Unlike so many rock-dicks, this one is unflinched and unashamed to investigate the financial circumstances, deals and wheezes behind such ventures. Indeed, the book's lasting worth is down to it being as much a business report on the independent sector, from London's early BOs upstairs club rooms to the faltering economies that led to the growth and subsequent collapse of Rough Trade Distribution at the end of the 80s, and its knock-on effect on indie music. As an object lesson in how not to do things and nevertheless end up in and in McGee's case, on the money, it's a gripping read. It also manages to chart the trajectory of the term 'indie' itself from state of mind (c. 1983) to genre definition (1986) to marketing ploy (c. 1991). In the early 90s, McGee finally strikes gold at the end of his psychedelic rainbow with the behemoth of Britpop: *Coke* (who barely merit a mention until page 405, nearly four-fifths of the way in).

That Creation allowed some of the most self-indulgent artists their head is both tribute and to indictment of their vision. A peculiar duality developed in which a roster of artists sought to follow in the footsteps of worshipped artists: *Beasties*, *Slaves*, *Love Television*, *New York Dolls*, etc. while remaining 'authentic' — that is, removed from mainstream chart-obsession. Although Creation's quest for 'perfect pop' tended to be heretofore in the realm of farcicalness and small pressures rather than the mainstream media they more actively courted (and which Cavanagh a long-serving freebender in the latter sector, naturally foregrounds), the 90s found McGee

suddenly in the money jettisoning around the globe, siphoning cash top-ups from American licensees, hiring a Black Crowes producer for Primal Scream and finally influencing New Labour policy on financial aid for struggling rocksters. Not even Jeffrey Archer could have dreamed that story up. But it's hard not to admire his doggedness — especially knowing now that he couldn't really afford to replace that Rickenbacker guitar he smashed in front of my eyes on a cramped stage in Bristol in 1987, during a gig by his own group Bill Bang Pow!

ROB YOUNG

Wake The Town And Tell The People: Dancehall Culture In Jamaica

By Norman G Scott
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS \$18.95

Rude Boy

By Chris Golewicz
VICTOR COLLINGS Pbk \$10.00

Jamaican Warriors

By Stephen Fiebig
SANTALUKA Pbk \$15

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the bookshop... yet more reggae tomes surface. Like just about every other reggae book ever written, these three suffer in varying degrees from the 'white man in Hammersmith Palace' syndrome, exotifying Jamaicans and their music to often quite ludicrous degrees.

Although Simon Reynolds cogently argued in *The Wire* 199 that the Afro-futurist dub apostles have rewritten the roots reggae canon, the liberation message of Bob Marley, Burning Spear, Culture, etc. is still invariably what turns on Babylon and its documents. Norman Scott's anthropologist and Senior Research Fellow at the University of California, Irvine's Center for Research on Information Technology and Organizations, tries to redress the balance by focusing on that pantheon of the reggae romantics, the dancehall. *Wake The Town And Tell The People* is an admirable attempt to change the terms of the debate, engaged in by the Bronx journalists and tastemakers who have dominated the discourse on Jamaican music. Although he misses a few opportunities and, perhaps understandably given his background, his musical analysis leaves a bit to be desired, Scott's 'horizontal' analysis of the rise of dancehall culture, particularly how it grew out of the gang rivalry sponsored by Jamaica's two main political parties, effectively maps the socio-political onto the music. Considering how little has actually been written about the

most popular form of reggae over the past 20 years despite the rains and rains devoted to Jamaican music, its lewdness and repertoire of numerous yard dances is a crucial contribution to the literature. Unfortunately as it's too often the case with these sort of books, *White The Town* is undone by its tone. His work is filled with sentences like "We talked about the dancehall scene not only in abstract or ideal terms, in the formal interview setting (ie models of action), but also as they were actually moving through it (ie models for action)." Sidoroff suggests that Michael Manley's vision of a unified Jamaica foisted because of his "overreliance on European cultural models" yet he duplicates this in his overreliance on stale, parched academic prose. Not that the book should be written in jargon or anything, but you end up hoping for Count Munchausen or Capricorn to burst in, talk over Sidoroff's lack of focus and lively up the text.

Where *White The Town* falters because of its andy, *Rude Boy* fails because of its flowery pie in the sky absurdity. It is subtitled *Once Upon A Time In Jamaica* and like a fairy tale, it's pure fantasy. The book is laid out as a diary, jumping from 1969 to 1966 to 1978 to 1900 BC, to 1994 to 1987 and back to various points in the '70s and '90s. But even within the individual chapters, *Rude Boy* is all over the place in the space of one page. Sidoroff moves from the police to a rambling collage of paragraphs about Michael Manley the CIA and the PBO to a section that begins, "Jamaica is certainly one of the most beautiful countries in the world." Actually, he is trying to tell you about how JA musicians feel they get ripped off. Elsewhere he whines about the chewing gum strewn about after bashments running his Paul Smith shorts (of course he has to tell you they were Paul Smith's) and writes, "The relationship a Rastaman will build up with these lands begins to take on a near-sexual — no, near-familial — quality. No Western nonsense about communing with nature here: this is spirit providing direct fuel-injection of their forces into his soul until it and that of Jamaica have become as one." But the low point really comes when, without any irony, he details Bob Marley's astrological chart as proof of his connection and importance to Jamaican culture and culture.

Against all the odds, travel writer Stephen Foehr's *Jamaican Manners: Reggae, Roots & Culture* is the best of the bunch. There are some crass descriptions of the "The woman's black eyes were a hymn" variety sketchy musical history and bad fact-checking (the calls Clement Cossans Dodd "Clement Cossane Dodd" more than once) to be sure. But where Sidoroff just seems interested in gathering tales to tell at the pub and Sidoroff fails to capture the local color, Foehr gives his stories and quotes space so that they become real and, often, moving. Foehr is also easily the best writer of the three, and his description of the music at a dancehall event is perfect. "The sound system blasted behind the zinc fence with the unseen DJ causing

confus, interruptus to songs while shouting out his own expletives."

PETER SHAPIRO

Necessity Is... The Early Years of Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention

By Billy James

SAR PUBLISHING PRC \$12.99

The author of this unauthorized history of Frank Zappa and the earliest incarnation of his group *The Mothers Of Invention* is a music writer who also goes under the musician pseudonym of Anti-Bae. As Anti-Bae, James has befriended and recorded alongside original Mothers members such as keyboardist Don (Dom) Dawid Preston, saxophonist Bunk Gardner, drummer Jimmy Carl Black, bass player Roy Estrada and Zappa sidkick Euclid James "Motorhead" Shenwood, whose collective memories make up the bulk of this slim, type-setted, but engrossing volume. *Necessity Is* follows a similar format to Lunor Nottet's James's collaboration with guitarist Bill Henderson (aka Zoot Horn Rollo), which gave the inside story about Captain Beefheart And The Magic Band. Slam both books together and you have the possible first draft for a more detailed study of 60s US freak culture, a little documented movement that was more politically and socially aware, more surreal and even harder than the plastic hippies whom *The Mothers* lampooned so brilliantly on their *We're Only In It For The Money* album.

Those who have already devoured David Whalley's *No Commercial Potential*, Ben Watson's *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics Of Poodle Play*, Neil Slaven's *Electric Don Quixote*, Greg Ruzoff's *Cosmic Debris* and Mike Barnes's *Captain Beefheart* will be lower! Familiar with the basic story that connects *The Mothers* to their leader and taskmaster Francis Vincent Zappa (what makes James's book such a delight is, this time the story gets told by the original group members mostly

Preston and Gardner) who give a clearer insight into the natural history of *The Mothers* their music: a hybrid of experimental, classical, jazz, rock and 50s doo-wop), their hidden talents and Zappa's tightly disciplined, drug-free working methods and demands. *Frank Ouf* guitarist Henry Vestine (who later joined Canned Heat and recorded with Albert Ayler) was fired for flagrant disobedience. Zappa's rule, leaving the rest of the group to discreetly deal with dope and hallucinogenics, or engage in (FZ approved) acts of sexual deviancy (the results of which found their way into *The Mothers'* albums, performances and folklore).

Their tabloid 1967 "Absolutely Free Pigs And Repugnant" residency at the Garlick Theatre in New York's Greenwich Village is glowingly reworked with bizarre tales of model graffities spurring whipped cream doo-ripping manies, together with guest appearances by Tiny Tim, Richie Havens and Sandy Hurvit (aka Estia Mihovik) who was billed as "Uncle Meat." To give away too many of the truly freaky anecdotes sprinkled throughout the text in this review would spoil the fun. That said, Gardner's conversation with his 1955 Chrysler while under the influence of magic mushrooms deserves mention, as does the change-of-direction theory that a pre-Mothers Don Preston based on to John Coltrane while both were playing alongside drummer Elvin Jones.

James also includes vignettes of other important freaks who were equally involved in the group's evolution, such as engineer and "snork" creator Cal Kunk, and the album cover designer Cal Schenkel, and the late Lowell George who, like Vestine, enjoyed drugs too much and led to form Little Feat. Each of them adds his own inspired twist to *The Mothers'* history which came to an abrupt halt in 1970 when Zappa decided to go his own way. Choosing to ignore the blurb splashed across a Vince Records promotional poster for *Absolutely Free* he forgot to list his Mothers. Shame on him! The wound of that memory — coupled with Zappa's death

of prostate cancer in December 1993 — still causes the surviving Mothers to hurt. Indeed, Black, Preston, Gardner and guitarist Roland St German probably came together in 1969 to form *The Grandmothers* to finally prove that — despite the disapproval of their leader while he was alive, and later his estate — they were more than capable of playing this "freak" music on their own. By doing so *The Grandmothers* kept the spirit of Frank Zappa and the original Mothers Of Invention alive and snoring.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Scented Gardens Of The Mind: A Guide To The Golden Era Of Progressive Rock (1968-1980) In More Than 20 European Countries

By Dag Erik Atbjørnsen

ACADEMIC PRODUCTIONS PRC £15

In his previous guide *Cosmic Dreams At Play*, record collector and antiquarian Dag Erik Atbjørnsen focused in on the recorded artifacts from the then highly fashionable if elusive '70s Krautrock scene before it escalated in popularity with the publication in 1995 of Julian Cowie's best guide *Krautrockmaster*. Although it's unlikely that the remaining European groups covered in his latest encyclopaedic floppy tome will create the same kind of cult worship, Atbjørnsen deserves praise for his research. Yet the obvious enthusiasm he feels for his subject fails to materialise on the printed page. Most of the groups catalogued here, and the works they produced between the years 1968-80 sound as though they are collected exhibits in a private museum rather than rock innovators whose diverse musical legacy is waiting to be rediscovered and resurrected by a fresh generation of experimentalists.

Flipping through this book's 548 pages reveals a mindboggling mass of strangely monickered, mostly unheard of, yet fascinating psychodance/Progressive talent, some of which will be familiar to Mike readers — especially anybody who has scanned Nurse With Wound's legendary list of supposedly influential records. These include File Quixote, Ame Son and Musae Electronica Viva (both of whom recorded albums for BYG Actual), Christian Vander's Hagma, Malagasy Brain, Richard Pinhas's Heldon, Prague underground heroes The Plastic People Of The Universe and Univers Zero.

As Atbjørnsen points out in his introduction, one of the featured groups "belonged to one of the few generations in European history to experience a Cold War rather than actual conflict." The pieces of this giant jigsaw puzzle of a book gradually shapes an intriguing alternative history of Cold War Europe, but is author and editor should have done a better job of fitting them together to show us the full picture.

EDWIN POUNCEY



Bad hair day: Frank Zappa

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label lore

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Trikont

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E-mail trikont@trikont.de
Web www.trikont.de

Ownership Kiang (UK)

Run by Achim Bergmann

Roster includes Markus Dierich,

Groucho Marx, Dock Bagg, Damaand Gales, Daniel Johnston, Elliott Sharp, Amadeo Arden, Ich Schwelch, Neil Atwiner, Kap Wodis, Willie Dunn, Oona Falcon, Floyd Westerman, Champy Jack Duane, Kildare, Clemey Mayfield, Louisiana Ramblers, New Klezmer Trio

Brief history Trikont was founded in Munich in 1971. It grew out of a small left wing publishing house that used to distribute Chairman Mao's Little Red Book and The Diary Of Che Guevara. We were part of the non-dogmatic, left radical student movement and wanted to put out the music of the people that was not available in Germany at the time. Music and songs used in the struggle against atomic power stations and all the fight for regional independence. Trikont's motto 'Universe Sametime' (Our own voice) is a legacy of that time. We developed an interest in local and vernacular styles which expressed a regional identity, and released LPs of Native American Indian songwriters, Floyd Westerman and Willie Dunn, Greek rembetika, Cajun and Zydeco Klezmer and music from the Alsace region. Another important branch of our activity is compilations and archival recordings.

Statement of intent We want to release more music which has a certain intensity and a connection with real life. Music is not just music!

Other activities Setting in certain beer gardens in Munich and enjoying a pint of Bavarian beer. Running an independent label is more than a full time job.

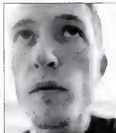
Future plans Two volumes of *Overcome! The Full Fantasy Of Gospel Music*, Mexican *Panchos* - Past Is Present, *American Parks* and a new Willie Dunn album.

Choice cuts Various Heller & Hill, American War Songs, Various Dead & Gone Vols 1 & 2, Various Old World Music From Vietnam

(Info and manager) Achim Bergmann and Christoph Wagner

multi media

Adrian Shaughnessy surveys **Kim Hiorthøy's** heart-on-sleeve designs



There exists a small, scarcely visible music industry sub-cluster of record sleeve designers who, not content with designing covers, also make records. Russell Mills, famous for his collage covers for Eric Burdon and the New Animals, has produced two CDs of music. The great Miss Klavewin (designer of sleeves for Miles Davis, Last Poets, Sade) switched sides and released an album of spoken word wordiness. No Man's Land, with Swedish jazz percussionist Per Tunberg. Currently, the most interesting British practitioner of this dual role is Trevor Jackson, whose sleeves for his own Output label eschew an auteur-like integrity.

But another prominent gameskeeper-turned-sonic-poacher is Norwegian designer Kim

Hiorthøy. Regular Wire readers will be familiar with his cover art for Rune Grammofon (the label's stylish ads have been a feature of the magazine over recent years), and now Hiorthøy has produced *Tree Weekend*, an elegant monograph of his graphic work, and, slipping into a musicianly role, a CD of wintery electronica called *He*.

Hiorthøy discounts the idea of an upsurge of digitally enabled graphic designers pumping out music with the same ease that they might produce an album cover. "I don't think it's so interesting if a person who makes record sleeves also happen to make music, and I don't know if it's a trend. I don't use the same tools to make music that I do to make graphic design. It's two different things for me," he says.

At a time when mainstream record companies produce tower art of lineshaking banality, fans of sleeve design and eagerly rely on labels like Rune Grammofon to keep alive the notion of cover art as a vital constituent of visual culture. Hiorthøy's sleeves are an engaging mixture of 60s abstract expressionism, Games-era modernism and Twombly-like pencil scratchings. They act as a potent calling card for Rune Grammofon, and provide a seductive conduit into the electronic soundworld of the Norwegian label.

Married Eicher has suggested that the main function of cover art is to hint at the sort of music contained within. Not much of a conceit for the next Elton John album

perhaps, but certainly an important consideration for new music, or music that comes without the promotional arsenal employed by the major labels. It's a feat achieved by many of the great sleeve designers over the past 40 years, and Hiorthøy succeeds brilliantly with his evocative cover art. The sleeves sound like the music — as well as providing a recognisable label identity.

However, the notion of sleeves "describing the music inside" is one Hiorthøy has little sympathy with. "Like everyone else, I associate certain imagery with certain music," he states. "But I don't know that that is necessarily good. I think that if a sleeve can tell you exactly what the music inside is like, then that is likely to be a very boring music. Anything can be the cover for any music. You might get very low record sales or get people off, or you might open someone's ears to something that they hadn't heard before."

But it's different for labels that espouse a homogeneous musical ethos. Here, there is real merit in telling a potential audience what the music is like through the medium of the covers. Of course, it's something Eicher himself has accomplished successfully at ECM, although perhaps the most celebrated model is Red Mills's monumental achievement at Blue Note. No two of his sleeves are the same, yet you can always spot a Blue Note cover at 30 paces. Taken as a whole, the sleeves form a cartography



for a musical aesthetic. Interestingly, Hiorthøy cites Mills as an influence, although it is probably impossible to be a sleeve designer and not feel the long shadow of the great man?

Hiorthøy is much more than just a sleeve designer. He's a versatile and expressive artist whose work is defined by the term "graphic design." He's also a photographer, a film maker, a writer, and now a musician. His visual work is characterised by the dark spirit of Nordic art; his photographs evoke Bergmanesque ennui, and the silks from his films look as if directed by a postmodern frozen working in underground cinema.

Tree Weekend also contains tantalising glimpses of Hiorthøy's writing skills. A series of aphoristic tales suggest the musings of a Scandinavian Zen master. "I like to write, but I don't find that I am very good at it," he notes modestly. "The stories in *Tree Weekend* were inspired somewhat," by John Cage's one-draw in his book *Seneca*. "I like paintings with words in them."

Currently books devoted to graphic design seem to be pouring out of various publishing houses. This indiscriminate landfill approach results in some fine books, but *Tree Weekend* reminds you that the best graphic design is worth collating, scrutinising and savouring. And it contains a good recipe for potato soup. *Tree Weekend* is published by De Gestichten Verlag. He is available on Smalltown Supernatural.

GO TO:



Radioqualia

www.radioqualia.net

Like so many brilliantly designed Websites, it is not immediately clear what Radioqualia actually does. In their own estimation, the site is an "electronic portal into the eccentricities of Antipodan radio space" — attempting to simulate the introspective and seemingly morose properties of sense-datum, through sound. So now you know. Best to forget trying to figure out what they're about and to hit on the juke instead. The Frequency Shifts section is the place to head for a superb mixture of artists, ranging from Laurie Anderson to Thomas Breckmann and biding in Sun City Girls, Dumb Type and Oval on their way. But the random tracks from mysteriously anonymous contributors are what keep you on the edge of your seat.

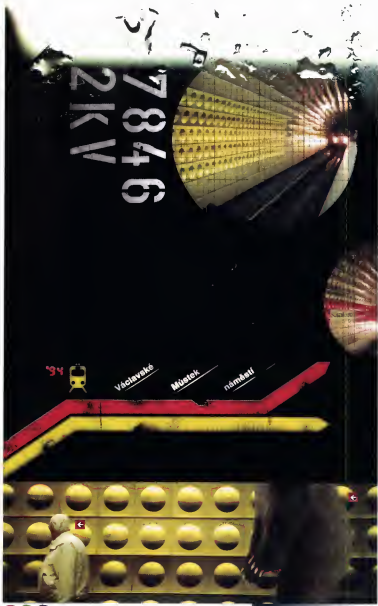


A Yoko Ono Box

www.yoko.ono.net

Some 20 years after John Lennon's fatal shooting, it is a shame that Yoko Ono is still better known as his widow than for her own contributions to art, writing and music. A Yoko Ono Box aims to redress the balance. Far better constructed than your average unofficial fan site, it is good to look at, easy to get around and frequently updated. More importantly, it contains all manner of information drawn from a large archive of Ono's own writings on feminism, music and Lennon. Samples of her music can be accessed through scans of her album covers. You can also bring up her song lyrics, as well as interviews from 1968 to the present. And the section on Ono's art opens a fascinating journey to her Fluxus past.

ANNE HILDE MEIER



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High on their own supply:
Acid Mothers Temple

Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso UFO + Makoto Kawabata + Zoffy + Seikazoku 2000

UK: London Upstairs at the Garage

Stumbling down the stairs into the London night, as on the wrong end of a pushchair full of Charles Hayward's percussion was not quite the moment of rebirth I had expected after two days cocooned inside Japan's Acid Mothers' psychedelic womb. They brought with them enough CD-Rs to build a spaceship, plastic raggies to keep the drive and sufficient har to carpet the bridge leading bay and most of the lower decks. So despite the dense strains of their most recent PSF release, *Troubadours From Another Heavenly World*, the scene appeared set for two nights of mayhem in the form of their customary blend of near-ecstatic psychedelics. You would be forgiven for wondering, then, whether Acid Mothers Temple are not an entirely serious live proposition. However, these live luxury freakstorms occupy their own unique cosmos while drawing their life from the most euphoric vein of wiggled-out psychedelic excess. Funny — yes, periodic — no. They proved to be an ecstatic trinity of levitational force that lacked me eight miles high — and laughing.

The task of opening the proceedings fell to Kawabata with two glittering pieces of solo guitar: the first bowed, the second strummed. Building layer upon layer of delayed tones and rumbling drones, the sound rose beautifully in arcs towards the firmament. But somehow it proved difficult to really engage. Perhaps it was the raggies, or the skewed pre-gig humour, or the presentiment of what was to follow, but for one needed to laugh. And as if in answer to this need came the idiot acid-folk covers duo Zoffy. Comprising Kawabata and Onnoide Haraba bassist Atsushi Tsuyama on acoustic guitar and vocals, the pair set about downscaling and detuning classic rock: Led Zeppelin's *Cream*, Deep Purple and more. For sure, there were moments of real beauty as they leaped into the west of deep psychedelic folk at which Tsuyama's resonating voice is so perfectly suited. But the mood was set for mirth, merriment and musical carnage, and they hammered it up with mutated versions of "Immigrant Song", "White Room", "Smoke On the Water" and yes, even "Stairway To Heaven". Had this been an entirely premeditated party piece it could have been a grisly sight, but the laughter was infectious and genuine. And before there was time to regain composure they had already launched into a short but exhilarating set from the Tokyo

German group Seikazoku 2000, featuring Kawabata and Tsuyama yet again with Ryo Quawa on drums. The power trio tore through a set of the kind of blistering hardcore workouts that they can do blindfold, it hardly mattered. It was play night after all. Support for Tuesday night came from a hastily assembled line-up of heavyweights, Hugh Hopper (Soft Machine), Charles Hayward (This Heat) and Phil Miller (Hatching Plot) together with vocalist and lyricist Lisa S. Klossner. Following the song form explored on the Hopper and Klossner albums *Different* and *Crytek*, Hopper's trademark distorted bass provided the linchpin from which Klossner wove her dark and jazz-tinged vocals. Although completely at odds with Acid Mothers' unparalleled universe, the incongruous juxtaposition was nonetheless remarkably well received, especially given that what we came about to receive was nothing short of communion with the Acid Mothers themselves. The set began with Hagada Hiroshi and Cotton Casino hunched over two basic mono synths at the front of the stage, sending gurgling, rumbling so-f-f squallies into the atmosphere. A full two minutes passed with the sound growing denser and darker until, as if triggered remotely, the group erupted into a furious freakout on hypersine. Three back cuts

of hair flying wildly in the orange light, Kawabata wrenching shards of wail-n-ha feedback from his guitar while the stage shook visibly under the force. The zero-gravity thrills of "Pink Lady Lemonade" rose remorselessly to a frantic pace, while the man from the new Aron Dual II-inspired (P) Lo Nono was the centrepiece of the set. Beginning with the bizarre saxophone of four members of the group throat-singing the intro like Steeleye Span on a bad trip, they then lurched into a massive rumbling ode to *Prokus Dei*. A ramshackle cosmic ballad followed, with Cotton Casino wailing dogs on Venus with her morbidly puny, yet almost inaudibly high voice. A climactic "Sweet Guru" a stop-start 12 bar Steeleye workout ensued, and then it was over. Was this a serious proposition? Well, it left me with two lasting images. Charles Hayward bent double in hysterics at the side of the stage, laughing, disbeliever etched into his face, and Cotton Casino shooting herself in the head repeatedly with a plastic ragdoll. And somewhere in all this is the total indication of that otherwise endangered species, the rock n' roll gig. The enduring mystery, however, is how it was that I came to leave by way of a pushchair and not, more fittingly, aboard the mothership.

STEPHEN ROBINSON

Avanto Festival & Kalmus Symphony

Finland Helsinki various venues

If any A&R men are paying attention, my bet for the next Seattle or Madchester or Cologne is Finland. The country's got all the ingredients: a small population with slightly unhinged sensibilities who spend the better part of the year in the dark, bowed to bears drinking copious amounts of alcohol. If that also sounds like Aberdeen, then consider the Finns outward-looking nature, a rapidly diversifying culture (the lot to be extracted from both a functioning social democracy and the country's telecom boom), and a plentiful supply of good, cheap secondhand records and you've got the makings of, if not a revolution, then at least a future Eurovision dynasty.

However, as the *Avanto* Festival (the country's first avant electronics strand) and Kalmus Symphony showed Finland is already producing music worthy of attention. Accompanied Pohjonen is surely one of the world's most disorganized musicians — a kinetic fringe combination of Viigie, Haimanen, Pihlström, Brian Eno, Astar Pazzoski and The Heavy Wanderers — and his first orchestral work was no less unique. A work for accordion, the 15-piece Tampere Sinfonietta and percussionists Andrius Aselka and Samuli Kosminen, the Kalmus Symphony was performed at a sold-out Savoy Theatre to a strange mix of severe-looking families and well-turned-out hipsters. *Kalmus* begins with a grinding violin loop and plucked strings with the musicians sitting behind dangling, diaphanous ribbons acting as a curtain. Simultaneous with the curtain's ring, the strings and Pohjonen create sounds that wouldn't be out of place on

a John Carpenter score, but the slasher mood is eventually undercut by synthy brass and woodwinds and sonic images of Pon dancing in a Heli-Patch. The percussionists soon join in on a Glady Panch contribution of New Panch proportions, with one playing tricky bell patterns, the other lycans. After Pohjonen speaks in tongues and breaks into a French seaside chant, the strings and rolling percussion build to a crescendo which stops suddenly with a thud of heavy synth. The percussionists then come over all Stamp with triton-like bass before modulating towards *Famadau*, Don Moye territory on homemade metatrophes. A few minutes of going brushing shifts into an Edith Piaf chanson with percussion by Prince Jimmy and an accordion solo by Thurston Moore. Striving, dive-bombing sheets of sound suddenly become passages of delicate finesse. At one point, Pohjonen and the violins click and click into their mics, creating a Tournet's symphony. Despite the slowish theatrics (Pohjonen's ridiculous rodostat poses on the FX pedal, the 45Sync routines of the strings) and the sheer amount of stuff going on, the attention to micro detail was rather remarkable.

At the *Avanto* Festival later that same evening at the Gloria club, the attention to detail was no less significant, they were handing out earplugs at the door — Merzbow was playing. First up, though, was Kalle Mathews, who set up off the stage, in the centre of the audience area, in pitch black, aside from her work lamp. From the balcony it was like seeing in on the artist in her atelier. Mathews was surrounded by a couple of hundred people sitting crosslegged and quiet as she moved from onwallowing low end drones to perching electronics to the death march of an insected

army to car skids and train whistles. Local boys Strom ec followed with engaging but not terribly special mid-oddism soundscapes. Then it was one man and his Powerbook against the world. With gale fixed and seven Zen posture Merzbow set perfectly still, unwavering as the world (and a hyperactive dyke machine) burned around him — I don't think he even blinked. As Merzbow ran through the entire frequency range from 15–60Hz, a Death Metal exclamation in a leather duster with cut-off sleeves and spiked leather bracelets smiled the smile of the damned while using the entire set without earplugs. Despite the occasional bats throbs that conjured up the ghost of Frankie Bones past, the guy who danced through the first half eventually realised it was a lost cause.

The festival also featured an excellent film

"heated Alone marching music". The Bastards were followed on stage by the much more sporadic trio of Christian Fennest, Peter Rehberg and Mika Vainio. Although Vainio was looking rather rickish in a magenta bowling shirt and grey low-drawn's cap, with the backing stage and the three men staring into their machines, it was like you were in the Star Chamber waiting to be judged. And the music was definitely a test of your will: grinding power, Psycho-style electronic stabs, dubby passages with blurring glitches. Local act Oviata moved from peasant, festival Techno to state of the art. Andrius and had the kids dining. Finishing things off, Pan Sonic's Iloa Varanen performed a set of preposterous white noise. During times that a Full Watts record he was thrashing to death? — maybe nothing to worry Q-Bert but



Opil Bastards at Avanto. Above: Fennest, Rehberg and Vainio



programme curated by Mika Tuomola. Highlights included Jan Heliwell's *Crystallization*, a fantasia of intense pulsating colour and dancing droplets made by applying bleach and ink to Super 8; and Herwig Weser's *Entree*, kind of like Abraham Zapruder filming power plants before breaking into geometrical abstraction with a score by FX Randomo and Jan St. Werner. In the same theatre inside the stunning Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Scanner played a line set of crackles, wizzes, the odd string sample some theremin whining and some beconstructed beats. There was close-up footage of his hands at work with what looked like a bank of credit card vending machines. One really charming number in which he tapped out the beat on a numbered keypad, was like the sound of number crunching — a bureaucratic worst nightmare.

Many sane peoples' worst nightmare is Helsinki's own Opil Bastards, who played a set of bees whorls and humdrum static, to bizarre videos of action figures made out of ginger root. One song had a baseline like Michael Myers gaining on you with steadily building clicks, like a Cham Reaction record on coke. Another was like Gil Melle directing the camera band from Star Wars, while Scanner described another as

pretty enjoyable nevertheless.

The following evening, Pan Sonic played an excellent gig (even if the volume was so low that Peter Rehberg fell asleep) at the Kiasma Theatre. Varanen was working his ways like a Kingston DJ throwing sound effects through the dance, while Vainio sat staring at his machines like a physics professor concerned that the experiment had gone wrong. Heartbeat beats were undercut by waves of razzes, beer-growlers, claps and a bell caught in a glass. A game of conkers later broke out on the percussion, while "Pentamant" and "Jupiter Jazz", as Dated by Freddie Kruger howled in the background. Later at the festival's after-party in a beerish beer cellar in the Academy of the Arts, a DJ played Finnish rock legends Hagganens' a Finnish version of "Kung Fu Fighting" and Euro-disco's evil twin in the form of some guy intoning "Disco disco, disco! must lightn' it!" The Pink Ties followed with a nice mini-set of decomposing electronics, and Fennest played his Beach Boys set of oceanic electronics which made someone sporting a fabulous beard start crocheting. And if that's not a ringing endorsement of the Finnish music scene, I don't know what is.

PETER DRAPPO

PHOTOS BY HETUARI

Tape wrinkles: Henri Chopin



Henri Chopin

UK: Leeds-based De Montfort University

Sound poet Henri Chopin is a legend. Born in 1927, he spent in wartime prison camps convinced him that non-verbal communication was a humanitarian necessity. He utilized post-war literary Paris by declaring that it wasn't enough to make letters dance over the page like Guillaume Apollinaire: poetry should be made from the panting breath and gurgling guts of the poet. The new technology of the tape recorder was crucial: not to document poetry readings, the drip-drip water rustle of TS Eliot delivering his lines like a lawyer reciting a will—but to take the listener's ear right inside the poet's mouth, down into the guts. Amplification becomes a sensitive audio microscope, allowing to audibly the very hum of nerves and the whisper of blood. Overlapping and talking could make material the springings of memory and desire.

In the early 60s, Dom Sylvester Houedard introduced Chopin to Bob Cobbing in London

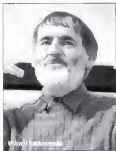
and Ernst Jandl in Vienna, thereby creating a howling trimerate of neo-Dada assault on sense and syntax. In 1979, Chopin published a book, *Poésie Sonore Intermédiate*, claiming that his innovations had rendered the whole corpus of French literature obsolete (even Claude Révelier accused him of egotism). In the 90s, Matt Ward of Stock, Hansen & Waltherman released a Chopin piece as a 7" single.

Like all real legends, Henri Chopin is hard to find. You must stalk him with care. For several years, Nicholas Zaturigg, director of the Centre for Contemporary Arts at De Montfort University, has been using his Fluxus past to organize conferences on the avant garde. The famed (or better theorized) tapes of the postmodern academy (even the wild-eyed wets of 60s excess, over grateful for the exposure and a modest fee). The conference in December centred on poetry—visual, conceptual, concrete and sonic. So the incongruous Bob Cobbing was on hand to present a paper of cut-up phrases about the limitless horizons of deconstructive plurality. What he feels is "gasp." At the finale

Cobbing slid into infantile glossolalia, singing and muttering and raising as he made his way to his seat. His colleague Maggie O'Sullivan read pages of her headbanging neo-Victorian topography her spooky tones suggesting a teenage turned witch in a Brit Horror doc. Her dense prosody achieving the extraordinary feat of making every word sound like a compressed line-with-a-rhyme.

This was all fabulous enough, but Chopin's reel-to-reel tape recorder left the conference afloat out of field. The legend is small and shrivelled and wears a tweed jacket that's too large and all lipels, but his smile is wide and happy. He evidently adores his creations: howling in their monstrous slurs and pops. He plays them back ferociously loud (people around me were blocking their ears) and often holds up a forefinger indicating their climaxes and twists and textual transformations. He slows the tape and speeds it up again, changes balance and volume and tone with the avidity of a child toying at space ships. His quite literally visceral sounds (in 1977, Chopin named a piece *Contra For Two Parts And Joan Corvus*) hint at postmodern developments in music (the 'tagging' first Baki/Benkin duet, Iancu Dumitrescu, Zappa's "Them Or Us" guitar, and the latest wave of fucked-up electronics—phenomenon/ruck, Dallas Boner, THF Drenching, BarK). His *Fresco To The Improbable* voice is a torrent of burp and crackle and sputter, words particles and hissybaker farted-like overture. Everything gleams with drama and precision: the tension on display makes much noise would hopelessly Wagnerian. Thankfully Chopin mixed all the conference's theoretical adlogia and presence from our ears, and left us feeling joyful and alive. Wow.

BEN WATSON



Helmut Lachenmann

UK: Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

Although the nail chairs may have accounted for the less-than-sellous audience there was still a fair crowd for the German Retrospective at the first weekend of the

year's Huddersfield Festival. The music of Wolfgang Rihm and York Holer was featured, but like though these composers are the legendary Helmut Lachenmann was the main draw. The Town Hall saw the UK premiere of his large-scale work *Ausgang: Music For Piano And Orchestra* from 1985, an extensive operation which brought The BBC Symphony Orchestra under Jos Van Steen to Huddersfield.

Lachenmann (born 1935) studied with Stockhausen in Cologne, but his formative influence was Italian avant-garde and communist Luigi Nono, who criticised what he regarded as outmoded bourgeois elements in his students' music. Lachenmann's upending of traditional aesthetics (Cage must have been in the frame too) led him to what he describes as "botanical explorations" exploring new possibilities of sound production using traditional instruments. The singing instrumental tone—domesticated by tradition as Lachenmann puts it—was almost completely replaced by a whole language of unorthodox tone production and literal use of silence. The process of composing a piece became one of "inventing new instruments".

It's been said that Lachenmann's modernism makes music from "the defocus of sonic phenomena", and in *Ausgang* unorthodox playing techniques were a leitmotif—a preponderance of tonalities sounds mostly breathing from the wind instruments, and strata grinding and scraping away from the obvious place on the strings. Bowing on the page was one of the more exotic locations. The orchestra which included a second piano, acted as a kind of sounding board for the piano soloist Ueli Wiget. This was detached, objective, not conventionally beautiful music that nonetheless compelled attention.

The afternoon had seen a chamber concert in St Paul's Hall, featuring pieces for chamber orchestra and for percussion soloist Interior I for percussion soloist. Features marmite and vibrations along with various drums, cymbals, gongs, cowbells and temple blocks. Sustaining spasmodic gestures combined with rapid glissandos in a glazing display of percussion mastery by Rumi Ogawa-Heldrich from the Ensemble Modern in Paris. With Leonardo, which featured the Ensemble with two narrators intoning a text by Leonardo Da Vinci, there was even a rennaissance of Derivee Bailey's deconstruction of acoustic guitar.

Lachenmann is 65 and has had a series of releases on the Awaida Phonogram label, including a recent midsize release. The fact that much of his output is for crissly large ensembles hasn't helped, but his music remains little heard outside Germany, especially in Britain, despite the advocacy of a few enthusiasts such as pianist Ian Pace. This was a rare chance to hear some of his forbidding but fascinating productions, in the only way that can really do them justice. Live.

ANDY HARTON

Phonomanie Festival Austria, Ulmberg Jazzatelier

In early December, Ulmberg, a tiny town in northern Austria just across the border from the Czech Republic, played host to Phonomanie VI, a festival of new and improvised music curated by minimalist electronic impresario Werner Dalfelder. Festival promoter Alois Fischer commissioned Dalfelder to assemble the new performances and one installation over the course of two successive nights. At 30 minutes each, the sets were short and intense.



Dalfelder's mix of existing projects and real encounters generated both the relaxed intimacy and the unpredictably tense feel of a family gathering.

The first night commenced with the duo of Burkhard Stangl (guitar) and Christof Kutzmann (IG computer, theremin). They began, as always with the initial section of their signature track "Nordrand," moving on after a few minutes to a fully improvised set. Kutzmann gradually built a foundation of gentle rhythmic pulses, transposing into crackles and sporadic beats (robe). Stangl countered with short melodic phrases, lone streams of his acoustic guitar and bowed tabletop scrapes. The duo's easy interaction elicited the loudest applause of the festival.

Franz Hutzinger employed a special quarter-tone trumpet for his solo set, allowing him to access a broader microtonal scale. He partially filled the veins with water beforehand and held the instrument monolithically with the microphone deep inside the bell. With impressive breath control, Hutzinger created machine-like gurgles that sounded electronic in origin. While technically stunning, the overall effect remained a bit dry, more a series of extremely demanding exercises than a truly musical performance.

Formed in 1993 with POWSchoof, John Butcher joined in 1998. POWSchoof was the longest-running project in the festival. The quartet performed two pieces from its recently recorded third album. For one, Michael Moser's "Mendota Strappings," all four members had setups both inside and outside

the instruments. At predetermined intervals, a computer program pulled sounds from the piece and played them back. Through this gave the musicians a bit to react to, their intricately detailed performance remained fairly static. Next was the debut of Dalfelder's *Flower*, a game piece with a graphic score consisting of 24 separate drawings, which limited the response options. Although POWSchoof are used to challenging both their audience and themselves with very complicated pieces, this material was still fairly new and they weren't entirely comfortable. A brief, beautiful improvisation closed the set, combining quiet

and staking motions. With the touch of a pen, Hutzinger gradually fed back unaltered audio sounds through the four channel system, using left sounds to echo and amplify the impact of Moser's live playing. The conclusion was exceptional. Hutzinger laid out a gentle electronic bed for Moser's deconstructing gestures until both streams slowly faded away to silence simultaneously.

Dalfelder, Ulf Fussenegger (both upright basses) and Dieter Kovacs (rhythmic) provided a festival highlight, constructing a perfectly integrated collage of tiny sounds that spiraled Kovacs's buzzes and crackles (made with and without records). The individual instruments were indistinguishable for stretches remarkable for this combination. Klaus Lang (small church organ) and Roberts created a fairly static drone with Roberts using an E-Box on his tabletop guitar. This was essentially Lang's project, leaving Roberts little room to work within the drones. Lang introduced actual chords near the end, destroying any effect which had been slowly build.

Phonomanie VI closed somewhat anticlimactically with a two performance by Butcher, Hutzinger and Kutzmann. Butcher took the lead. Kutzmann reduced his role to that of a courier. Kutzmann also remained surprisingly relaxed. They concluded with a meeting sequence of false strings, which they kept afloat for a few minutes, finally proceeding between sound and silence.

Dalfelder's vision resulted in a tightly focused festival, one in which every piece played an important role. Like a top-notch improv set, the overall success was greater than the sum of the individual parts. 12 musicians, nine projects, limitless possibilities.

JON ARREY

PJ Harvey USA, New York, Bowery Ballroom

I reckon The Wire is not the obvious place to announce the utility of rock music, but it would feel irresponsible not to just having seen Polly Jean Harvey perform. Her charisma is beyond any anthem. Her talents are humorous and her skills are various, but what she is currently performing is world-class guitar-driven rock music. Watching her play you can hardly guess why anyone wanted rock to do in the first place.

Harvey herself has abandoned guitar rock several times, first, when she released the cabaret blues of *To Bring You My Love* and second, when she flailed her voice and rode beats on *Is This Desire?* The latter seemed especially far from Harvey's inner strength rarely PJ Harvey. Any fancy production gambit that comes between the listener and Harvey seems dull. I also don't understand Harvey's mid-90s decision to submit her immovable, flat voice to the structures of an opera coach (it's not like she's ever had pitch problems) but I figured I Harvey was in the driver's seat, I'd get used to whatever came next. Which I did sort of, though Desire has

never fully made sense and upon a return to *Is This Desire?* from *The Wire* seemed to confirm in the same vein of Big Eternal Themes done in dramatic style. And for a rock album, *Is This Desire?* is a great work of art (almost cruelly) to a great voice, a great constant that Harvey's musical vision goes way beyond her singing.

Well, forget all that. Love is different (and I was wrong about the album). Wearing a close-fitting, sleeveless black dress with a white hem and a trim little portable mirror (spiral) strapped to her arm, Harvey entered to worshipful harpists, strapped on her lumbar red Gretsch hollow body and opened the show with a solo rendition of "Red Oil Me." You think the possibilities are played out, the moves exhausted, and then one by one person stands in front of you, singing and playing a guitar. She proceeds to play *Madagascar* with a soundtrack of energy and meaning, but never once blinks in uncertainty or works to let you know how special she is for thinking it up. She just does it and when the song's over, you feel like you've never seen anyone sing a song before.

The story of *Is This Desire?* that Harvey came to New York, fell in love with somebody and made an album. From the point she fell back in love with things she works well with: rough guitars, specific imagery (I like to make in Brooklyn), wear a hundred billion miles away, and a general desire to close her heart to the music. Her group, drummer Rob Ellis, bassist Eric Drew Feldman and guitarists Tim Farringham and Marguerite Fidler, are only too happy to let Harvey jump on. This is Love, the emotional center of the new album, the group stayed loud and warm, making a case that the spooky ballad-like songs were gone. Harvey swung her hair, shook her hips and made it clear that while Robert Plant was good with a microphone cord back in the day, she was merely setting a precedent for Harvey.

"The Mess We're In," which approaches been melodrama on the album, became romantic dread when Harvey performed both her own and Thom Yorke's vocal parts. "Kamikaze" roared with such abandon one wished she would keep up the temperature for several songs at a time instead of switching moods. Not that anything really failed. For "Angeline" Harvey played guitar, while Ellis and Feldman played alternately arpeggiating and driving keyboard parts, and a song I had previously rejected as sub-Biblical holism seemed like a real hit story.

Which is part of understanding Harvey. I may prefer the unadorned Harvey of the first two albums, but it's nice paying too much attention to songs PJ Harvey's songs are away for her to let out her memories in front of you not to let waiting for completion and turning. Once she has the stage stuff that seemed haunting or morose on record becomes carefree and spontaneous. Here PJ Harvey is the sort of PJ Harvey she's there to a lifetime and with the element, gifted performer and be thankful we're all here together.

SARAH PRINE-JONES

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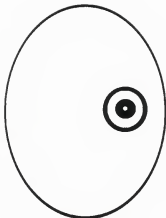
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January's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts



Leading the charge: Otomo at Japonorama

UK Festivals

Japonorama

Otomo Yoshihide curates this touring celebration of the Japanese underground which showcases musical approaches ranging from avant rock to improv, skewed pop and noise. Performers on this package tour include Oshima Haco, Sachiko M Taku Sugimoto, Toshiyuki Nakamura, and classical players Ko Ishikawa and Man Furuta, all playing in shifting combinations. Exeter Phoenix (12 January) Brighton Pavilion (13) Colchester Arts Centre (14) Liverpool Unity Theatre (16), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (17), Manchester Contact Theatre (18) Oxford Playhouse (19), Sheffield National Centre For Popular Music (20) Kanda Brewery Arts Centre (21). The tour is sponsored by Contemporary Music Network and supported by The Wire. For info, go to www.cmntours.org.uk

International Festivals

Christian Marclay: Cinema

The avant turntablist's first solo exhibition in the Great White North will focus on works that use cinematic sound as their principal

source, and will feature a selection of the turntablist's audio and video works. Canada, Dorville Gallery Garioch Gardens, until 4 February, free, 001 905 844 4402, www.cokillgalleries.com

Multiphonies

NAVIGR's 23rd 'cyclo acoustique' continues with live electronics performances of pieces by Daniel Torreggiani: Ernst Helmuth Flammner, Benjamin De La Fuzio and Kaga Saoraho. France, Paris Maison de Radio France, 19 January, free, 00 33 1 56 402988

Sons D'Hiver

The tenth edition of this French festival takes over its baroque venue to 'twine the creativity of our time'. Featured performers include John Zorn's 'Mosaic', Zeena Parkins' 'Pascal Compaoré', First Frith, Blue Man, Hadoak Trio, Bob Orling, Elly Elkin, Andrea Parkins, Jim Black, Ensemble Modem, Transglobal Underground, Eugène Chadbourne, Paul Lovens, Marc Ribot, Louis Scorne and Vemem Reed, among others. France, Paris various venues, 12 January-10 February, times/passes vary, www.sonsd'hiver.org

Special Events

53 Hours Of Merzbow

You've been to album release parties and special listening sessions, but this once in a lifetime event will see the Colchester Arts Centre playing all 50 CDs of Merzbow back to back, without a break for 53 hours straight. The Wire's Edm Pouncey has thrown down the gauntlet by listening to the entire opus in three days. Who will be man enough to beat him? Colchester Arts Centre 20-22 January, doors open at 10pm, \$1 01206 500990

Republic Of Thorns

Setting up in Wordsworth's home in the Lake District, artists Russell Mills and Ian Walton, and writer Paul Farley have collaborated on an installation examining human interaction with nature, including soundscapes, sculptures and poetry. Grasmere 3 W Gallery, previews on 20 January (11am launch March), 9 30am-5 30pm 015394 35544

Russian Music: Between East And West

Alexander Isakshin, Director of the Centre for Russian Music, delivers a lecture/recreation

on the role of music in a changing Russian society. Included will be performances of three works by Russian composers by Ivashkin and Maria Krivenski. London Goldsmiths College, 23 January, 5 30pm, free, 020 7919 7971

Williamsburg 2000

A small installation of sound art in the ever-so-thin section of Brooklyn, featuring Francisco Lopez, R. Bwana, Chop Shop, Gen Ken Montgomery, Bron Conley, John Huckle, Sean Pishkin, Pat Courtney and Geoff Organ. USA New York Highland Tunnel, until 7 January, free, 001 718 384 5738

On Stage

Cosmos/Tatiana/Gary Jeff Extreme multimedia performances and 'textual Ambient noise'. London Red Rose, 12 January 9pm-1am, \$5 0794 007 9615

Elton Dean Trio Saxophonist plays with John Edwards and Mark Sanders. Leeds Warehouse, 24 January, 58/16, 0113 245 5570

David Johansen The former New York Doll plays his first UK dates for ten years, celebrating American Primitive music with his new group with the giveaway name, The Harry Smiths. Leicester Charlotte (24 January) London Forum (27), Dublin Whelans (30) Galway Rosin Duth (31)

Gary Jacobs Captain Beethoven's first mate resurfaces again in Bightly. London Bordenline, 12 January, 020 7734 2095

Magnetic Fields Stephen Morris's indie troupe performs the entirety of his mammoth 69 Love Songs album over two nights, twice. London Hammersmith Lyric Theatre, 17-20 January, 326/10 020 8741 8701

Modeshi, Martin & Wood Jam-band jazz from the Yankee trio. London Barbican, 20 January, 7 30pm, £20/15, 020 7638 8891

Mixing It Live Session (Leffeld) An evening's courtesy of the Radio 3 show, featuring Billy Jenkins Blues Collective, Soley and David Thomas & Two Pale Boys. London Draperys, 23 January, 7 30pm, free call 0870 0100 300 for tickets

Michael Moore Quartet Dutch improv with a line-up including Han Bennink, Mark Hobas and Alex Muijen. Leeds Warehouse, 31 January, 110/68 0113 245 5570

Nikki Teoh & Cleveland Watfous The jazz keyboardist and vocalist team up for another event in the Serious Sampler series. London Sato, 25-26 January, 8pm £7.50, 020 7392 9082

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 FRI 2 **LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall
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 SAT 3 **BRISTOL** St. George's Bristol
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 SUN 4 **CAMBRIDGE** Corn Exchange
 01223 357451
 MON 5 **NOTTINGHAM** Royal Concert Hall
 0115 989 5555
 TUE 6 **COVENTRY** Warwick Arts Centre
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TUE 13 **SOUTHAMPTON**
 TURNER SIMS CONCERT HALL
 023 8059 5151

WED 14 **LONDON**
 QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
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SAT 17 **KENDAL**
 BREWERY ARTS CENTRE
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Club Spaces

Breakin' Bread Funk and HipHop vocals with Mr Thing, Born To Rock, Robi Lee, Skag and Tullius, London, p.m. 19 January, 9pm-3am, £5/£3, 07867 547 008, www.breakinbread.org

Condition Of Muzak Contemporary electronic music from Freeform, Spongetoy, Terich and Dianon 1 in a converted public toilet in Spitalfields, London Public Life, 20 January, 7.30pm, free, 020 7836 4257

Destination Out Eclectic night hosted by Ross Allen. This month featuring the Pressure Drum Sound System with MC Skibadee, London Cargo, 11 January, 8pm-1am, £5, 020 7354 9611

Honest Jon's The Portobello Road record shop takes it to the stage with a mix reflecting the store's eclectic racks, London Net Bar Mondays, 9pm-2am, £2 three before 10pm, 020 8969 9822

Klinkies Dada Improv shenanigans, with Ghost, Before Breakfast and Jack (4 January), Blonde Blitters and Lynda Beest & The Phantom Breasts (11) Lawrence Option (18) Unusually Tim (25), and The Noise Eaters Monsties (26) London Sussex, Thursday, 020 8806 8216, www.theklinkiesfreevibe.co.uk

Kosmische Textonica from DJs Stan D'Armande, Martin Jupiter, Jim Backhaus and Cheeky Monkey, plus live performances by Shook-headed Peters and Guggini, London Upstairs at the Garage, 27 January, 9pm-3am, £5, 020 7607 1818

Mystic Motor City booty from DJ Godfather and resident Dirty Wiggles, underneath an Indian restaurant, Paisley Rocky's Basement, Koli-4-Noor, 19 January, 10.30pm-2.30am, £10, e-mail mystic_motor@hotmail.com

Perverted Science Afro-electro percussive sounds, with Portshields's DJ Andy Smith, Russ Dewbury, DJ Euroh, Pete Harbert, L Jay 33 and Orson London 333, 19 January, 10pm-5am, £10/£6, 020 7739 5949

Popliteal The Bohman brothers' ever changing Improv night, with Tony Wines, Jim Dvorak, Matt Hutchinson & Marj McDonald, Mark Browne & Steve Nash (15 January), Charles Hayward, Aschweig Marsh, Jacqueline Grant & John Edwards and Ron Brehet (22) Tilly Bevan, Simon Rose, Adam Bohman & Jonathan Bohman (29) London Bonington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

Slack Sabbath Brighton's DJ Dwaiteiron and crew keep Sundays special, with a guest appearance from Ghetto Tech Incipit DJ Godfather (21 January) London 333 Club Sundays, 8pm-2am, free, 020 7739 5949

Spearl The long running electronics club teams up with Americas Carpark Records, with Sally Sissons, Signer, B4Tonic and S-(i)-c(i)-e London Global Cafe, 11 January, 7.30pm-midnight, £3/£2, 020 8568 3145

Incoming

AcousticCA (events three and four of the iCA's electroacoustic music series feature music and films by Phil Nalook (4 February) and electroacoustic music from York, with works from Trevor Wishart and Roger Marsh, among others, London iCA, 4 and 11 February, 8pm, 020 7930 3647

John Cale En-Velvet on tour, London Queen Elizabeth Hall (13 February), Dublin Vicar St (14), Cambridge Corn Exchange (15), Exeter Phoenix (16), Warwick Arts Centre (18)

Dedbeat Weekender Something for the weekend in Norfolk, with a line-up including Aphex Twin, Death Charge, Andrew Weatherall, Big Daddy Kane, Roots Manuva, The Pharcyde, Jeru The Damaja, DJ Vadim, Luke Vibert, Mr Scruff, Mr Complex, Mr Thing, Kelt Dargie, Strut Records DJs and many, many more, Great Yarmouth Vauxhall Holiday Park, 23-25 February, £85, 01493 453899

Interference: Plunderphonica The Wire and the Lux Cinema present a night of cut-ups, collage and illegal sampling, featuring a rare chance to see Craig Baldwin's film *Sonic Outlaws* (including contributions from Negativland, John Oswald, The Tape Babies and EBN) plus a live multimedia performance by People Like Us, London Lux Centre, 15 February, 8pm, £6/£3, 020 7684 0201

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra Wynton Marsalis's jazz classics return to the Barbican for three days to celebrate Louis Armstrong and the kings of swing, and to perform a new score of Oscar Micheaux's pioneering film *Body & Soul*, London Barbican, 9-11 February, 020 7638 4141 The group will also be touring throughout the UK, with dates at Birmingham Symphony Hall (4 February), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (5), Newcastle City Hall (6), Cambridge Corn Exchange (8), Brighton Dome (13), Poole Arts Centre (14), Leicester De Montfort Hall (15)

National Review of Love Art 15th edition of Britain's longest running festival of live art will feature new sound and music works from Scanner & David Shee, Stewie Wishart, Ananion Bonnos, plus artists from Japan, Mexico, USA, UK and Europe, Glasgow Arches, 14-18 February, festival pass £25 (single day £7.50), 0141 221 4001

Tygers Of Wrath Grand finale of Tate Britain's William Blake exhibition features music from John Webber, Billy Bragg and Blur's Alex James, David Bowie with Simon Boswell and the London Gay Men's Choir. Also cabaret and magic, from graphic novelist Alan Moore and readings from Ian Sinclair, London Purcell Room, 2 February, 7pm, £18, 020 7960 4242

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National

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John Peel Tuesdays-Thursdays 10pm-midnight The now venerable mix of rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronics, dub and the legendary sessions

Gilles Peterson Wednesdays midnight-2am Up- and down tempo beats, experimental drum 'n' bass, funk, psychedelic soul and plenty more in between

Fabio & Grooverider Fridays 2-4am Two hours of vanguard drum 'n' bass from two of the scene's longest serving DJs

Westwood Rap Show Fridays 7.1pm-2am/Saturdays 9pm-midnight Tim's Hip-hop tips

BBC Radio 3 90.3 FM

Late Junction Mondays-Thursday 10.15-midnight Steve Sharp and Fiona Talkington present news and discussion of a diverse musical selection

Jazz Legends Fridays 4-5pm Archive recordings and interviews presented by Julian Joseph This month: Abdullah Ibrahim (5 January), Don Cherry (12), Cannonball Adderley (19), Betty Carter (26)

Jazz Line-Up Saturdays 4-5pm Jazz magazine programme presented by Stacey Kent and Claire Martin

Jazz File Saturdays 6-6.30pm Jazz documentary series

Mixing It Saturdays 10.45-11.30pm New music mix with Robert Sandall and Mark Russell

Jazz On 3 Saturdays 11.30pm-Fri 10pm Modern jazz in session and concert. This month: Best of 2005's sessions (5 January), The Necks (13), Paul Motian Trio (20), Danilo Perez

World Routes Saturdays 11.30pm-midnight New World Music magazine programme, hosted by Lucy Dorian with regular guest Andy Karshaw

Regional

BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.8/104.5 FM, 855 MW

On The Wire Sundays 8-10pm The Wire's resident dub-cummed Steve Barker mixes dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free jazz, World Music and more

BBC Merseyside 95.8 FM, 1465 MW

PM5 Sundays midnight-2am Formerly The Late World Noise, Roger Hill's mix of avant rock, psychedelia, warped Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.1 FM

From Bedouin To HipHop Mondays 8-9pm David Sellers drops jazz and new beats

Beat Patrol Sundays 8-9pm Peter Aston plays independent music across the spectrum

Galbe Radio 88.6 FM (Gilton Keynes)

The Garden Of Eatin' Delights Mondays 10pm-midnight Shane Querton's blend of avant rock to electronic exotica, with bizarre soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Patrick Ferge Sundays 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

Frost and Hyde Sundays/Mondays midnight-2am Breakfasts, Jungle, drum 'n' bass

Slipmatt & Friends Mondays 2-4am Jazz, Jungle, cyber-soul breakbeats and electronic grooves from this lively bunch

Andy C, Kenny Ken, LTJ Bukem and Ray Keith Wednesdays 2-4am Drum 'n' bass

London Live 94.3 FM

Destination in Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 10pm-midnight Ross Allen spins a motley selection of new music, from spacey jazz and minimalism to electronic and leftfield pop

Solid Steel Mondays midnight-2am The Ninja Tune posse's tasty stew of funk, jazz, breaks and beats seasoned with nutty speech bites

Charlie Gillett Sundays 8-10pm Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more

Surf 101 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired Day 1 (1pm-7pm) Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes, laced with 60s/70s flashbacks

The Chili Factor Sundays 5-7pm Dave Craske's continuous mix of drum 'n' bass, dub, Hip-hop, classical, electronics and more

Our event listings for inclusion in the February issue should reach us by Friday 12 January.

MB Listings information MUST include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price.

Listings cannot be taken over the phone

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epiphanies

Jah Wobble plots a personal journey into dub, mantric rhythm, subharmonic oscillations and electric jazz

The first form of music that really took me into another world was dub reggae. I was about 15 and heard it with my friend Ronnie Britton at a party we had gatecrashed in Hackney. I was already a fan of ska, bluebeat and early forms of reggae up to this point, and I feel duty bound to point out that I was also a fan of Rod Stewart and The Faces. Philly soul and Stevie Wonder. However, nothing prepared me for the shock of listening to dub, especially through big custom-made 22" speaker cabs. There was the bass taking up most of the signal, resonating deep into my solar plexus, the core of my being. All the big plate reverbs and tape echoes, especially the long

decaying half time ones, conveyed a sense of inner space. In between the dub versions, there were the regular reggae tunes, with the occasional soul tracks thrown in. I could not wait for the DJs to return to dub. Most of all, I was fascinated by the basslines. I stood as near as I could to the bassbins (as I still do), and was overjoyed to see the bottoms of my trousers flapping. The sheer physicality of the experience set it apart from any other.

It was not long after this that I saw Bob Marley play his famous gag at the Lyceum in London. This still stands head and shoulders above any other concert I have attended. The group was the epitome of tightness, as I recall they dubbed it up towards the end of the set. It was an education. I was at this time a regular listener and tapper of Tommy Vance's excellent Friday night Capital Radio show. It was here that I learnt the names of the major reggae artists and producers, among them King Tubby and Lee Perry.

Once, when I was lying in the bath, I heard some tracks on the radio by a group called Led Zeppelin. The name rang a bell at the time, nothing more. The thing that completely captivated me was the drumming of John Bonham — especially, I realise now, the accents of the bass drum combined with Bonham's power on the kit. Though I did not go on to be a fan of the group, something was transmitted to me the instant I heard it. Around the same time I first heard Can. The track was 1971's "Hallelujah." Yet again it was the rhythm that mainly captivated me, played by the combination of Jakko Liebert (his name translates as 'love me') on drums and Holger Czukay on bass. I also remember being very moved by the music featured in a cinema advertisement for cigarettes, one of the first sophisticated subliminal ads I'd featured fragmen, swimming pools and helicopters, none of which are smoker-friendly. I only mention this ad because I believe whoever put the music together was paying homage to Can's style. It always sent a shiver up my back and made me wonder why the films I went to see did not have music like this.

When I was a teenager I was drawn to listening to shortwave radio oscillations, primarily as a means of helping me sleep. I liked the very deep, naturally phased oscillations. Thanks to

subharmonics, these oscillations are inherently musical. As the frequencies drifted, ghostlike voices would appear, making a collage — sometimes *Voice Of America*, baseball results, etc., or perhaps a Radio Moscow English language broadcast, boasting about the forthcoming grain harvests. However, on one memorable occasion it wasn't Cold War ideology that I picked up. It was the voice of heaven. Gum Kalsoun. I had inadvertently tuned into Radio Cairo. From then on, I regularly tuned in to Radio Caro and Radio Tehran. I still think that all music sounds better imbued with shortwave radio phasing. I remember 1979 being a great year for shortwave radio oscillations. This is due to their link with sunspot activity, which peaks and declines every 11 years or so. So far, then, we have the essential basic ingredients, BASS, subharmonics, rhythm, modality, collage and solar power. What I needed next was to learn how to harness and channel all this.

Around the end of 1978, Kenny Macdonald (a taker of my acquaintance, and a big PJL fan), played me something he said I had heard Miles Davis's *Dark Hogus* (the electric masterpiece recorded live at Carnegie Hall in 1974). The first thing that struck me was Michael Henderson's Fender bass, groovy and rifty but moving at the same time. Then there was Al Foster on drums, at once empty yet powerful, with lots of half-time feel, and rhythm used as texture. Not only was this music a major leap forward, but it synthesised everything I've already talked about. Miles's trumpet is the same thing as a diva singing, his organ the shortwave oscillation. The bottom end was there, as was space and depth. Parts collage over one another. At times the band is funous, at others as solemn as funeral music. Miles had the thing beyond logic, chose the right players and set the atmosphere. When this happens players surprise and sometimes scare themselves.

I was very lucky to become friends not long after this revelation with a chap called Angus Mackinnon, who at that time wrote for a music paper. He was, and still is, a complete Miles nut. He introduced me to all the electric period Miles and a lot more. A real education.

Modern composers Gorecki, Pärt and Taverner have played a big part in inspiring and educating me. By listening to Gorecki's *Third Symphony* over and over again, I realised that you could indeed develop while standing still. It's all in the canonic approach: static patterns moving in different orbits around one another. Always the same, yet depending on the context they are in, always different. This same principle is analogous to life itself. From this effect voices are produced, for better or worse. We are a constituent part of these vortices. With the kind of spirituality inferred and bestowed by music such as *Dark Hogus*, we can move through the emotional weight and pull created by life's vortices. At this point you do not need to play or listen to music, as it becomes apparent that it is everywhere. This is one thing these musical experiences have taught me. □ Jah Wobble will be performing at *The Wire Sessions Live* on London's South Bank on 26 March.





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Goldfrapp 'Felt Mountain'

Utterly sublime. Brilliant. Astonishing. We are not worthy.
(7" 10" 11" 12" 13" 14" 15" 16" 17" 18" 19" 20" 21" 22" 23" 24" 25" 26" 27" 28" 29" 30" 31" 32" 33" 34" 35" 36" 37" 38" 39" 40" 41" 42" 43" 44" 45" 46" 47" 48" 49" 50" 51" 52" 53" 54" 55" 56" 57" 58" 59" 60" 61" 62" 63" 64" 65" 66" 67" 68" 69" 70" 71" 72" 73" 74" 75" 76" 77" 78" 79" 80" 81" 82" 83" 84" 85" 86" 87" 88" 89" 90" 91" 92" 93" 94" 95" 96" 97" 98" 99" 100" 101" 102" 103" 104" 105" 106" 107" 108" 109" 110" 111" 112" 113" 114" 115" 116" 117" 118" 119" 120" 121" 122" 123" 124" 125" 126" 127" 128" 129" 130" 131" 132" 133" 134" 135" 136" 137" 138" 139" 140" 141" 142" 143" 144" 145" 146" 147" 148" 149" 150" 151" 152" 153" 154" 155" 156" 157" 158" 159" 160" 161" 162" 163" 164" 165" 166" 167" 168" 169" 170" 171" 172" 173" 174" 175" 176" 177" 178" 179" 180" 181" 182" 183" 184" 185" 186" 187" 188" 189" 190" 191" 192" 193" 194" 195" 196" 197" 198" 199" 200" 201" 202" 203" 204" 205" 206" 207" 208" 209" 210" 211" 212" 213" 214" 215" 216" 217" 218" 219" 220" 221" 222" 223" 224" 225" 226" 227" 228" 229" 230" 231" 232" 233" 234" 235" 236" 237" 238" 239" 240" 241" 242" 243" 244" 245" 246" 247" 248" 249" 250" 251" 252" 253" 254" 255" 256" 257" 258" 259" 260" 261" 262" 263" 264" 265" 266" 267" 268" 269" 270" 271" 272" 273" 274" 275" 276" 277" 278" 279" 280" 281" 282" 283" 284" 285" 286" 287" 288" 289" 290" 291" 292" 293" 294" 295" 296" 297" 298" 299" 300" 301" 302" 303" 304" 305" 306" 307" 308" 309" 310" 311" 312" 313" 314" 315" 316" 317" 318" 319" 320" 321" 322" 323" 324" 325" 326" 327" 328" 329" 330" 331" 332" 333" 334" 335" 336" 337" 338" 339" 340" 341" 342" 343" 344" 345" 346" 347" 348" 349" 350" 351" 352" 353" 354" 355" 356" 357" 358" 359" 360" 361" 362" 363" 364" 365" 366" 367" 368" 369" 370" 371" 372" 373" 374" 375" 376" 377" 378" 379" 380" 381" 382" 383" 384" 385" 386" 387" 388" 389" 390" 391" 392" 393" 394" 395" 396" 397" 398" 399" 400" 401" 402" 403" 404" 405" 406" 407" 408" 409" 410" 411" 412" 413" 414" 415" 416" 417" 418" 419" 420" 421" 422" 423" 424" 425" 426" 427" 428" 429" 430" 431" 432" 433" 434" 435" 436" 437" 438" 439" 440" 441" 442" 443" 444" 445" 446" 447" 448" 449" 450" 451" 452" 453" 454" 455" 456" 457" 458" 459" 460" 461" 462" 463" 464" 465" 466" 467" 468" 469" 470" 471" 472" 473" 474" 475" 476" 477" 478" 479" 480" 481" 482" 483" 484" 485" 486" 487" 488" 489" 490" 491" 492" 493" 494" 495" 496" 497" 498" 499" 500" 501" 502" 503" 504" 505" 506" 507" 508" 509" 510" 511" 512" 513" 514" 515" 516" 517" 518" 519" 520" 521" 522" 523" 524" 525" 526" 527" 528" 529" 530" 531" 532" 533" 534" 535" 536" 537" 538" 539" 540" 541" 542" 543" 544" 545" 546" 547" 548" 549" 550" 551" 552" 553" 554" 555" 556" 557" 558" 559" 560" 561" 562" 563" 564" 565" 566" 567" 568" 569" 570" 571" 572" 573" 574" 575" 576" 577" 578" 579" 580" 581" 582" 583" 584" 585" 586" 587" 588" 589" 590" 591" 592" 593" 594" 595" 596" 597" 598" 599" 600" 601" 602" 603" 604" 605" 606" 607" 608" 609" 610" 611" 612" 613" 614" 615" 616" 617" 618" 619" 620" 621" 622" 623" 624" 625" 626" 627" 628" 629" 630" 631" 632" 633" 634" 635" 636" 637" 638" 639" 640" 641" 642" 643" 644" 645" 646" 647" 648" 649" 650" 651" 652" 653" 654" 655" 656" 657" 658" 659" 660" 661" 662" 663" 664" 665" 666" 667" 668" 669" 670" 671" 672" 673" 674" 675" 676" 677" 678" 679" 680" 681" 682" 683" 684" 685" 686" 687" 688" 689" 690" 691" 692" 693" 694" 695" 696" 697" 698" 699" 700" 701" 702" 703" 704" 705" 706" 707" 708" 709" 710" 711" 712" 713" 714" 715" 716" 717" 718" 719" 720" 721" 722" 723" 724" 725" 726" 727" 728" 729" 730" 731" 732" 733" 734" 735" 736" 737" 738" 739" 740" 741" 742" 743" 744" 745" 746" 747" 748" 749" 750" 751" 752" 753" 754" 755" 756" 757" 758" 759" 760" 761" 762" 763" 764" 765" 766" 767" 768" 769" 770" 771" 772" 773" 774" 775" 776" 777" 778" 779" 780" 781" 782" 783" 784" 785" 786" 787" 788" 789" 790" 791" 792" 793" 794" 795" 796" 797" 798" 799" 800" 801" 802" 803" 804" 805" 806" 807" 808" 809" 810" 811" 812" 813" 814" 815" 816" 817" 818" 819" 820" 821" 822" 823" 824" 825" 826" 827" 828" 829" 830" 831" 832" 833" 834" 835" 836" 837" 838" 839" 840" 841" 842" 843" 844" 845" 846" 847" 848" 849" 850" 851" 852" 853" 854" 855" 856" 857" 858" 859" 860" 861" 862" 863" 864" 865" 866" 867" 868" 869" 870" 871" 872" 873" 874" 875" 876" 877" 878" 879" 880" 881" 882" 883" 884" 885" 886" 887" 888" 889" 890" 891" 892" 893" 894" 895" 896" 897" 898" 899" 900" 901" 902" 903" 904" 905" 906" 907" 908" 909" 910" 911" 912" 913" 914" 915" 916" 917" 918" 919" 920" 921" 922" 923" 924" 925" 926" 927" 928" 929" 930" 931" 932" 933" 934" 935" 936" 937" 938" 939" 940" 941" 942" 943" 944" 945" 946" 947" 948" 949" 950" 951" 952" 953" 954" 955" 956" 957" 958" 959" 960" 961" 962" 963" 964" 965" 966" 967" 968" 969" 970" 971" 972" 973" 974" 975" 976" 977" 978" 979" 980" 981" 982" 983" 984" 985" 986" 987" 988" 989" 990" 991" 992" 993" 994" 995" 996" 997" 998" 999" 1000



Einstürzende Neubauten 'Silence Is Sexy'

Blue flag gold & noise experimentalists celebrate 20 years with a new album, displaying moments of great beauty and unrestrained clarity. [5]



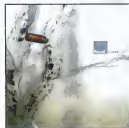
Venous 'Plus 8 Classics'

The Plus 8 label is recognised as one of the truly great electronic records of the 1980s. This album brings together some of its ground-breaking releases, including tracks from Planetron, Speedy, Henry Jackson and Cybertron.



Christian Vogel 'Rescue 137'

A string of excellent releases for the likes of Tronar and Milla. Planetron has named Vogel's production as one of the leading figures in European techno. From first breaks to further electronic, his first four albums of music through a musical style.



Recooliquid

A series of dark and disturbing pleasures, uneasy listening for uneasy souls. [The Independent]



Buzzcocks 'Time's Up'

The legendary band's new album from Howard Devoto's personal archive & CD ROM footage of the band's first ever gig.



Add N To (X) Add Insult To Injury

New album from electronic innovators Add N To (X). The band have been linked to a national treasure (NME) in their future delight. (Melody Maker) and instantly iconic, lightning-bolt-guitar. (The Face)

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